

CHURCH AND COMMUNITY: A MODEL FOR REUNITING
THE CHURCH WITH A CHANGING AND
CHALLENGING COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

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by
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St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church is a historic African American church located in the inner city of Cleveland, Ohio. The contextual problem was the church moved from being a vital community church to a vibrant commuter church. where the members were connected to the church but not the community. The hypothesis was if the church adopted a discipling process, it would become reconnected to the community.

Questionnaires, sermons, Bible studies, and a united community workshop were used to test the hypothesis and move the church and community one step closer to being visible to one another. The project was successful.

DEDICATION

Alex Haley once stated, “If you see a turtle up on top a fence post, you know he had some help.” I can without a doubt relate to that turtle. It is with an immeasurable attitude of gratitude that I write this dedication in acknowledgment of all the individuals that helped, aided, and assisted me in the completion of this doctoral program, project, and process.

I would first like to give honor to the village that raised and reared me. To my beloved parents, it has always been my intent to make God pleased and you both proud. Thank you for introducing me to our Resurrected Redeemer, modeling for me His unwavering love, and for showing me that I could accomplish anything through Him. You are forever my hero and shero. I also want to honor my grandparents who long ago joined that “great cloud of witnesses”: John M. Harris Sr., Edna Mae Harris, Weller R. Thomas Sr., and Cornelia Thomas, who I never met but have seen her beauty through the glow and grace of my mother. Honor and thanks also goes to my godparents, the late Clarence and Pinkie Williams, as well as Sonia Thomas. Thank you, to the entire Harris, Thomas, and Dillard/Murphy families for your continued love and support. I want to also give a shout out to the “Brothahood,” my brothers from other mothers, Jordan, Will, Curtis, Lance, “Red”, “D. A.,” and Joe. You all keep me sane, grounded, and focused. Thank you for always letting me be myself.

A special thanks goes to Doctor(s) Keith Donaldson D. Lawrence, Connie Carter, Donnell Moore, and Angela Washington for all of your leadership and love. Thank you to all of my cohort colleagues past and present for your acceptance, assistance, and affirmation. To my beloved, St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church family, thank you for your prayers, participation, and patience during this process. A special thanks goes to the Touch of Love Ministry for purchasing my books and doctoral robe. What an awesome and affectionate group of people you are.

To the love of my life and the life that I love, my wife and best friend who I affectionately call, “My Amazing Grace,” Courtney Lynn Harris, thank you for supporting me in my decision to further my education. This accomplishment is just as much yours as it is mine. I literally could not have done this without you and even if I could, I would not want to. I love you to life. To my son, Joshua Antoine Harris Jr, although you cannot read this now, I am sure you will later. I began this journey with you in mind. The length, width, and depth of your potential and power know no limitation. You will be a far better version of me just by being true to your authentic self and nothing will make me happier. I am honored and humbled to be your father. Papa loves you beyond measure.

More than anything and anyone, to God be the glory for the great things He has done. Time and time again throughout my journey, He has provided grace for my footsteps and mercy for my stumbles. I am hallelujah happy and glory to God glad, that my highest academic achievement is dedicated to the love of the Lord and the leadership of His church. May God continue to bless the work of my hands, the thoughts of my

mind, and the love in my heart “to serve this present age, my calling to fulfill.” Can anything good come from the inner city of Cincinnati? Absolutely!

INTRODUCTION

St. Timothy has a rich history of congregational and ministry growth as a predominately African American congregation. Its history chronicles such growth as pastors and members worked together to produce a vital and sustainable congregation from 1940 to the present time. The growth and vitality of St. Timothy while impressive on paper, has not had its difficulties and challenges. The most notable challenges of the church occurred under the pastorship of Dr. Tyree Williams. From 1989 to approximately 2013, the church took on many restorative projects and the arduous task of creating a multigenerational place to worship. This task was not easy and strained the congregation to its core. During that time, many of the members of St. Timothy were older and satisfied with the more traditional forms of Baptist worship. Although the congregation was stable, Williams noted the significant age gap among its members and sought to bridge this gap by attracting young adults and families with children. Over the years, this move increased the worship attendance but also gave the church new life.

A growing congregation that attracts younger families and members created the need for modified worship and enhancements to the favored traditional forms of worship. The increase in growth also expanded the reach of the congregation beyond the boundaries of the local community. St. Timothy began to attract people from the greater Cleveland community, including those of other ethnic groups. The church rapidly moved from being a community-based church to becoming a commuter-based church with the

majority of its members living outside the bounds of what is considered its neighborhood. While growth and stability was beginning to pay strong dividends for the life of the church, it also created a significant issue that this project seeks to address; the loss of relationship with the community surrounding the church.

The reality of becoming a commuter-based church, if not managed appropriately creates hardship and discord for the people who live in the community and depend on the services of the church as part of their daily survival. Since most of the members today no longer live within the bounds of the community, they have become numb to the need of the people within the neighborhood. This is the most pressing issue facing the church today. The church must reach out beyond its walls and reestablish meaningful ties with the people who live in the community. This can be very difficult and becomes a delicate balancing act for the pastor and leaders of the church. While the church wants to keep its members happy and satisfied, it also has a responsibility to be sensitive to the need of those in the community.

According to Joseph Tkach, in an article published by Grace Communion International entitled, “Working Together for the Gospel,” the church exists not for its own sake, but for the sake of the world, just as Jesus came not to do his own will, but the will of the Father who sent him.¹ Christian faith changes how we interact with the world. As Christians, we are still part of the world around us, but we are now, since Christ lives in us, part of the world in an entirely new way—a way that makes a positive impact in the name of our God who loves the world so much that he sent his Son for its salvation.²

¹ Joseph Tkach, “Working Together for the Gospel,” *Grace Communion International*, accessed March 13, 2017, <https://www.gci.org/church/ministry/working>.

² Tkach, “Working Together for the Gospel.”

People need to know that God loves them, that their lives have meaning and purpose, that there is hope even when physical life seems pointless. God has given us good news for them, and the Holy Spirit in us makes us eager to give it to them. They may not be eager to hear it, to be sure. Many people think they are doing just fine without God. But eventually the things they trust in—money, health, friends, intelligence, etc.—will disappoint them, and they will be ready to hear about a hope that is secure. That is when we need to be ready, and in order to be ready, we need to be alert, and in order to be alert, we need to be eager and looking for opportunities.³

Different people are differently gifted. Some think that evangelism is the main thing; others think that discipleship is the priority; and still others think that fellowship is all that's needed for a healthy church. Some focus on music, some on youths, some on grace, and some on guidance. Some are physically unable to leave their homes, and prayer is their labor of love. All such people need to learn to work together. Being together is a learning experience in itself—we learn to love not by being surrounded by people easy to love, but by sometimes being with people who are hard to love—people who are different from us. God puts us together for our own good, and we do his work better when we work together.⁴

The admonition of Tkach is the goal of St. Timothy and the goal of this Doctor of Ministry project. The project will seek to become faithful to the Great Commission by finding the lost, teaching the found, and sending the saved. The process will emerge into a wholistic discipleship process that honors the last command of Jesus Christ and

³ Tkach, “Working Together for the Gospel.”

⁴ Tkach, “Working Together for the Gospel.”

reconcile the church and the community to meet the relevant needs of those in the church and those in the community. Over time, the church will become a beacon of hope for those in the community while creating disciple makers of those in the congregation. Ultimately, the church will become a disciple-making organism with the expectation of all members to make disciples of those beyond the church.

Chapter one, Ministry Focus, outlines the intersection of my spiritual journey with the journey and history of the context. Within this intersection, you will find the challenges and struggles of a young man being led and guided without his knowledge to one day accept the call to Christian ministry. You will also find the challenges and struggles of the congregation down through the years. It is at this intersection that a common reality emerged giving way for problem solving to occur for the benefit of the church and the community.

Chapter two, Biblical Foundation demonstrates how scripture identifies the problem and provides a solution for the problems that exist in the context. In this wise, it can be noted that the problem of the context did not begin with the context, in fact, the problem has been around as long as the writing of the scriptures.

Chapter three, Historical Foundation chronicles the problem down through the years. It also provides historical evidence of the problem and how the church has dealt with the problem from the time of the reformation until today. The historical foundation provides a window into methods and models of ministry that have been tried over the years to eradicate the present problem of the context.

Chapter four, Theological Foundation provides the discourse of theologians and scholars who have sought to provide a basis for understanding how to view the problem in light of being in relationship with God.

Chapter five, Theoretical Foundation identifies the various ways and means that the problem of the context has been worked on currently. It is from the perspective of those working on the problem currently that a new methodology can emerge to add to the existing body of problem solving knowledge.

Chapter six, Project Analysis provides the methodology used in developing the ministry project. It reveals the results of the field study, how the data was interpreted, and the concluding thoughts toward this being a replicable model for other congregations to use and benefit from.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio at Bethesda Oak Hospital on January 18th, 1986. My parents are John Milton Harris Jr. and Evette Thomas Harris. My parents had initially planned to name me John Milton Harris III but were discouraged by some of our family members. There has always been a level of tension and unresolved conflict within the Harris family. I grew up feeling as if my parents and I were outsiders. There was the Harris family and there was us. I feel in my heart at times my father's siblings resented that he was named after the patriarch of the family. At the time of my birth my father was forty-three and my mother was thirty-four. Both of my parents have experienced a failed marriage prior to meeting one another.

My father pastored the Pilgrim Missionary Baptist church for fifteen years and Zion Hill Baptist Church for twelve years. My dad is far more gifted as a preacher than I will ever be and I often find myself thinking about what could have been if his mindset towards ministry and education were different. My dad has never pastored what some would call a large church but he is one of the best pastoral care providers I know. My father had a terrible temper and I saw that impact his ministry as well as our family. Over the years he has mellowed and matured which has been awesome for me to see his growth. I would have never thought my father and I would be as close as we are today. He is not the same man he was twenty years ago. I am extremely proud of him.

I have a very large family on both my mother and my father's side but I barely know them. Most of my father's family is in Ohio and the majority of my mother's family is in Virginia. I really desire to build a healthy relationship with my family. I am around parishioners and their families all of the time and it disappoints me that my family has not been a safe haven for me.

My childhood and teenage years were for the most part pleasant. I was raised as an only child. My parents who grew up with many siblings in the house made certain that I was always around other children in order to develop my interpersonal communication and relationship skills. I was very curious like most children. My niece, nephew, and cousins became my siblings and my siblings were more like my aunts and uncle. I listened to everything I could hear and internalized everything I could see. As a child, I absolutely adored my mother and lived in fear of my father. My father did not spare the rod and his voice was like thunder. It is amazing how you can love someone for what they are to you but hate them for what they do to you at the same time. My father's temper in many ways cultivated a hostile environment in our home. The only bond my father and I had was basketball. I often wonder if I would even like the sport if I had not seen how much he loved it and much happier he was when he was around the sport.

As a child, I was extremely shy around strangers. In front of cousins I was a leader and in front of the elders I was a natural entertainer. I loved to laugh to the point my stomach ached and tears ran down my cheeks. My niece, Brittany, who was just nine months younger than me, was my best friend growing up. When I remember the first few years of my church experience it was saturated with food, fun, fellowship, and most of all family. I lived for the weekend! As a Pastor's kid (PK) no matter what you are involved

in or no matter how your week went, you knew Sunday was coming. Do not get me wrong, I loved Sundays, but I had a special affinity at that time for Saturday. Saturday was when my niece, Brittany, and nephew, Isaac, would come over to spend the night so that they could come to church with us. Saturday was filled with movies, games, sneaking and staying up past our bed times. We did this religiously for years until our parents got into an argument. I never really got the details but apparently there was a disagreement between my mother and my sister, which completely changed things forever. It still hurts me to this day to even think about it. When the parents parted ways, we children consequently were forced to do the same. Nothing was explained to us. Nobody asked us how we felt. All I know is that Saturday was not as sweet and Sunday would never be the same. My niece and nephew never spent another night in our home and for the next few years I barely even saw them even though they lived in the same city. When we did see one another it was not the same. Children not only look and listen to their parents; they are also loyal to their parents. There was obvious tension between us due to the fact that we, the children, eventually clothed ourselves with our parents' conflict. Whether they realized it or not our parents were teaching and condoning dysfunctional behavior. It is not by happenstance that to this very moment, I still do not have a healthy relationship with Brittany and Isaac.

My parents did their best in raising me. For the most part, especially in my formative years, I would say I was very shielded and sheltered. If I was raising a child in the inner city of Cincinnati, I cannot say I would not have done the same.

My teenage years went by very fast. It is almost a blur. I have done my best to reflect on that time in my life. The word "awkward" comes to mind when I reminisce

about my teenage years. My body was changing, my voice was changing, and so was my viewpoint of the world. I lost my childhood best friend who just happened to have been my niece but God did something that blessed me tremendously. My cousin Malcome, who I had always been close with, moved into the neighborhood. I was ecstatic! Those were some of the best years. Malcome, who we called "Buster" (a name given to him by my grandmother in reference to how quickly he was birthed out of his mother's womb onto the couch), became to be as close as a brother. We were inseparable. As I got older, I could not help but notice our neighborhood changing for the worst. My neighborhood, Roselawn, was far from the suburbs but it was still a more than decent place to live back when my parents first moved in.

As a teenager I really struggled with self-esteem. I did not have a healthy perception of myself. I was very critical of my self-image. The clothes and the shoes I wore embarrassed me. I would watch my classmates wear top shelf brands of clothing and apparel while I was able to wear nothing of the sort. The interesting thing is that nobody ever made fun of what I wore; it was my own insecurity that made things worse. I just did not like the way I looked. It had an impact on my relationships or the lack thereof. I went on my first date during my senior year. I was what some would call a late bloomer but I was just elated that I finally bloomed.

As far back as I can remember, I have always had a sense of reverence and relationship with God. My parents were very instrumental in my conversion. My parents placed me in Christian school and gave their best efforts in creating and sustaining a wholesome Christian home. I publicly accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior on

November 7th, 1993. My niece, Brittany actually made her public confession that same day under the pastoral leadership of my father during his time at Pilgrim Baptist Church.

I have felt a sense of calling into the ministry for the majority of my life. From as early as the age of seven I felt a genuine tugging at my spirit towards the preaching ministry. I would write sermons and practice preaching them to my stuffed animals. I began having visions at the age of twelve that really left me with an unsettling feeling. I officially accepted my call into the preaching ministry during my freshmen year in college on November 7, 2004 while participating in my college choir concert. When I got back to my dorm room I had a multitude of messages telling me to call home. I called my parents' home and my dad broke the news to me. That same evening that I gave my life to Christ, my grandmother went home to be with the Lord. Once again, in a matter of hours, I went from rejoicing to mourning.

One of the most influential experience in my spiritual formation happened to me during my senior year of high school. I was catching the bus home on a very rainy day and I was absolutely having what I thought was one of the worst days of my life. I boarded my second bus and it was completely packed except for this one seat in the front right next to a gentleman that looked completely unkempt. I was upset with the world that day, was having a faith crisis, and just did not want to be bothered. The man I sat next to struck up a conversation with me and would not stop running his mouth. He began to share with me what had happened to him in the past few months. He shared his testimony of how he survived a car accident and had recently been released from jail after serving time for driving under the influence. That strange man was grateful to be alive. He then said something to me that I have never forgotten. His exact words were, "There is nothing

on this earth worth missing heaven for." That was it! That was exactly what I needed to hear. I got off that bus with a renewed faith and a passion for Christ. I turned around to thank the stranger when I got off the bus and to my surprise he vanished. I looked and looked and there was no sign of him. That word and that experience shaped the rest of my life in the most positive of ways.

Ministry has been a blessing as well as a burden. Christ is not an issue but sometimes the church culture is. I always have an intense level of paranoia that someone is watching everything I do through a critical lens and listening to every word I say seeking to find fault. I am hard on myself and it impacts my wife. Image is not everything but it definitely means something in ministry. I pray that as time goes by this type of internal tension will decrease drastically.

Fellow clergy in many ways disappointed me making it difficult for me to open up and develop genuine relationships with my co-laborers in the gospel. Jealousy, competition, and ego is every present within the pulpit. It still breaks my heart that the preacher that licensed me never took the time to develop me. I was getting opportunities to preach everywhere but home. I will never know why, but I have been blessed in spite of it. It has also been difficult to swallow the lack of family support, but that issue has been generational. I am still sorting through a lot of traumatic experiences that I have seen in both my ministry and my father's ministry. As a child I think I saw too much, but I have developed so much insight that I still do not regret it. It has enhanced my ministry and has given me insight on how to handle various situations. I do not have many preacher friends or friends involved in ministry. I am still in prayer concerning my trust

issues and also praying that God reveal to me whom He would have me be connected with in order to make an impact in the kingdom.

Education has always played an integral part in my growth and development. During the summer of my junior year of high school, I had the opportunity of a lifetime. A very notable philanthropic group, the Mayers Foundation, was looking to bring aboard approximately ten high school students for a summer service internship. The internship included taking a free college course at Xavier University and a job at a service site for the whole summer. I was told about the opportunity by one of the counselors at my school and my mother got wind of it so I had to apply. To my surprise out of over six hundred applicants I was selected as one of the ten students to be awarded the internship for that year. It was such a life changing educational experience. I was assigned to spend my summer serving the Cincinnati Children's Home. Ironically this was the first place of employment my mother obtained when she first moved to the city. I was able to serve as a camp counselor for their summer camp, "Camp I Can." That summer I was exposed to what I call "ministry that matters." Many of the children I served came from broken homes but I took great joy in making sure their time with me was both pleasant and positive.

After graduating from Roger Bacon High School, I enrolled at Northern Kentucky University. The institution was not far from home but yet far enough for me to learn how to be independent. I thoroughly enjoyed my undergraduate experience. I adjusted very well to college life. I got involved in various organizations and quickly became recognized as one of the university's emerging leaders. I chose to major in Public Relations with a minor in Marketing. My heart was to be in full time ministry but I knew

I needed something to fall back on. More than just another student, my peers looked at me even closer because I was a minister.

In the fall of 2009, I decided to drop everything and move to Richmond, Virginia to attend seminary at the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University. I just did not want to be a gifted preacher. I wanted to be a well-learned preacher. My experience at Virginia Union was absolutely amazing. Every professor stretched our theology and subsequently strengthened our faith. I was proud to be a part of a well-respected and represented program and I was looking forward to the opportunities that it could possibly bring. During my time in seminary I worked a full time job, pastored, and went to school at night. I grew up tremendously and God honored my faithfulness with His favor.

Adult life has been an absolute joy to experience. It has its ups and downs but I count it all joy. I was able to hold my own in a city where I was the only one I knew. As a single man I was able to matriculate through school, purchase my first home, had plenty of money in my pocket, and I am sure to my grandparents liking, I stayed out of jail. I was called to pastor my first church during my first year in seminary, the First Baptist Church of Mathews County, Virginia. As God would have it, I ended up pastoring my mother's childhood church. I did not know them and they surely did not know me, but God knew what He had in store for the both of us. It is not often a Baptist church calls a young single man to be their pastor, so I was extremely thankful for the opportunity to serve even though I was reluctant to accept it. The distance from my house to the church was one hour and thirty minutes. I wanted to prove to God through my faithfulness that He could trust me with more work.

My wife is my "Amazing Grace." She continues to look beyond my faults and sees my needs. During our relationship, we both realized that I had anger issues. I would find myself raising my voice and just being unkind. The apple never falls far from the tree. I loved Courtney so much that I wanted to be at my best for her. She makes me want to be a better man. Before we got married, I humbled myself and invested in therapy. I had no clue I had so many years of baggage from my childhood that I had yet to unpack. Therapy not only saved my relationship but it also saved my ministry.

I now serve the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church in Cleveland, Ohio. God once again showed his favor towards me as I was selected out of a pool of over five hundred applicants nationwide. I almost did not make it. The committee had selected their top three but I was cut because of my age. So they moved on to a more seasoned third candidate but when they called the gentleman his wife picked up the phone and told the committee that he had cheated on her and left her. The committee was stunned. So they end up inviting me to interview. I candidated against two more seasoned and experienced pastors but what God had for me was for me. I became the fourth pastor of the historic Cleveland based church and the youngest pastor trusted with such a responsibility. I am a blessed man. Everything I have, God gave it to me. Every day I get to do what I love. My passion is my profession. My wife has been with me every step of the way. As a kid I always dreamed of having enough means that would allow whoever my wife was to stay home with the children. I'm thankful to be able to relieve the burden of a nine to five off of my wife. She has made such a deposit in my life in the past six years. I promised God I would take care of her and that's what I plan to continue to do.

Ever since its inception in 1940, the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church has been a staple within the urban center of the city of Cleveland, Ohio. The church for many Clevelanders has been a place in which they call “home.” With so many inner city churches either closing or relocating to the suburbs, St. Timothy stands tall as one of the few historic churches within the area that still resides in the place where it held its inaugural worship service. During its almost seventy-six years of existence the church celebrates the fact that it has only been under the leadership of four pastors. St. Timothy has historically been a traditional predominantly African American church that is constitutionally associated with the National Baptist Convention, USA. Just as it is with many other major cities, the city of Cleveland has experienced and endured much transition and transformation especially in the lives of the African American population. Today the membership of St. Timothy continues to grow, change, and diversify while still celebrating its rich history and heritage.

The birth of St. Timothy was actually a result of a church schism. On Sunday, November 10, 1940, a Musical Tea was held at 2448 East 86th Street, the home of Sis. Mattie Davis, by a group of former members of Messiah Baptist Church who had dissolved their membership due to dissension and the desire to organize another Baptist church. As the oral tradition has it, the split in the church was due to a difference in appetite in terms of preaching style. It was said that the current pastor of Messiah Baptist Church, Reverend Henry Grady Lyons was not a “fire and brimstone” preacher. On the following Wednesday another gathering was held in the home of Brother and Sister James A. Thomas, 2192 East 73rd Street, at church time the nucleus of the St. Timothy Baptist Church was established. On Thursday, December 5, 1940, St. Timothy Baptist

Church was officially established and the installed Reverend Henry Grady Lyons as pastor.

In 1942, the congregation of the Independent Presbyterian Church at 7101 Carnegie Avenue was seeking to relocate. Members of St. Timothy began negotiating for the purchase of the property. Then on February 21, 1943, God's true and faithful servants marched proudly in their present home. Reverend N. Sylvester Williams preached the first sermon. Church membership in 1947 was approximately 250 members. Reverend Henry Grady Lyons died on July 26, 1947, after six and one-half years as Pastor. A few weeks before his demise, Brother J. C. Osborne was elected as the first Chairman of the Board of Deacons.

Succeeding Reverend Lyons was Reverend John T. Weeden, who formerly pastored the Eastern Star Baptist Church of Indianapolis, Indiana. Having been called to the pastorate of St. Timothy in December 1947, he officially began his ministry on the first Sunday in February, 1948. On October 26, 1975, the Women's Day Liquidation Drive climaxed with paying the balance of the church mortgage.

During the more than forty and one half years of his pastorate, the late John Weeden Sr., served St. Timothy and the community in an understanding and memorable manner. Pastor Weeden ordained several ministers who later became pastors. His death, September 17, 1988 ended a glorious period in the history of the church, which will not be forgotten.

Reverend Tyree Williams, assistant minister of St. Timothy was chosen as interim Pastor from September 1988-June 1989. Reverend Williams became the third pastor June 8, 1989 becoming the third Pastor in the nearly forty-nine-year existence. November 12,

1989 dedicated the former parsonage as an Education Center, named after the late John T. Weeden. Under Reverend Williams pastorate, ministers were called to be pastors, some ordained and licensed, deacons and trustees were added including women trustees. Reverend Tyree Williams passed away October 6, 2011. He will be remembered as the only son of St. Timothy that became pastor and recognized for his devotion to youth and formal education. For the first time in its rich history, the church embarked upon what would be a national search for its next spiritual leader. I, Reverend Joshua A. Harris was installed as the fourth pastor of the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church in January of 2014.

The St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church is currently located at 7101 Carnegie Ave., Cleveland, Ohio. The church is very much so located in the inner city of Cleveland. The neighborhood currently is transforming before the eyes of its residents. There is heavy and aggressive redevelopment going on all around the church. Cleveland Clinic Hospital which is by far the largest industry in the city, is expanding its territory almost daily. In 2014 the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church was approached about a plot of land that it owned. It was not until 2015 that the church at in its leadership seriously considered selling the property. After discussions with city officials, legal counsel, and prayer, the church decided to sell the property, which made it possible for Dealer Tire which employs approximately 500 people, to stay within the city of Cleveland. Even with the selling of property, St. Timothy still has room for expansion within the community. The current layout of the church's property is a sanctuary that seats approximately 500 people, a fellowship hall that seats approximately a little over 100 people comfortably, an education wing, state of the art kitchen, five restroom areas, and a food pantry. The

building (not including the educational wing which was an old car repair shop) is one hundred and twenty years old. With the age of the building comes some unavoidable wear and tear. A significant amount of the budget goes towards repairs. Overall the sanctuary's beauty is absolutely breathtaking but the rest of the property leaves more to be desired when looking through the aesthetic lenses of the twenty first century. Before his passing, Dr. Tyree Williams started a capital campaign called the Sinai Project, to extend the structure of the church, which would have added classrooms as well as office space. Although the Sinai Project fund grew exponentially it came at the expense of the general tithes and offerings plummeting.

The present ministry is still carrying on many of the traditions of its rich history. The church is striving to become a cross-generational and cross-cultural church. As God would have it, during his time at the United Theological Seminary, Dr. Tyree Williams was actually beginning to work towards transitioning the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church from being predominately senior citizen based to becoming multigenerational. After reading his dissertation, I prepared myself as God saw fit to be used as a continuum of the work that had already been started. There is nothing wrong with St. Timothy being a traditional church, the issue is they without knowing it they were practicing traditionalism.

Today, the ministry has become more welcoming of all generations but there are still many areas for improvement. In terms of worship the church has decreased its worship time from three hours to two hours. Under the leadership of a newly established Music and Fine Arts Ministry the church has adopted a blended worship style, which merges the contemporary and the traditional Sunday after Sunday. After noticing that the

church had barely any members that lived the community, the church is now focusing its time, energy, and resources on rebuilding its relationship with the community. Our goal is to become both a commuter and community church. The church is currently experiencing growth but retention is still an issue for us as a church. Another dynamic that impacts our ministry is weather. Cleveland experiences harsh winters well into March and at times even in April, which has a negative effect on our weekend attendance.

In closing, the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church of Cleveland, Ohio has a rich history and a bright future. Pastor Lyons led the foundational years. Dr. Weeden led the golden years. Dr. Williams led in the educational achievement years. I am leading the church into the 21st century. As the environment around it continues to change, the church must find ways to not only be a commuter church but a community church. New community relationships are being built in hopes of integrating the community with the membership.

Ever since its inception in 1940 the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church has been a staple within the urban center of the city of Cleveland, Ohio. The church for many Clevelanders has been a place in which they call “home.” With so many inner city churches either closing or relocating to the suburbs, St. Timothy stands tall as one of the few historic churches within the area that still resides in the place where it held its inaugural worship service. During its almost seventy-six years of existence the church celebrates the fact that it has only been under the leadership of four pastors. St. Timothy has historically been a traditional predominantly African American church that is constitutionally associated with the National Baptist Convention, USA. Just as it is with many other major cities, the city of Cleveland has experienced and endured much

transition and transformation especially in the lives of the African American population. Today the membership of St. Timothy continues to grow, change, and diversify while still celebrating its rich history and heritage. In the next few pages I will provide a historical description, geographic description, demographic description, and information on the present ministry at the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church.

The birth of St. Timothy was actually a result of a church schism. On Sunday, November 10, 1940, a Musical Tea was held at 2448 East 86th Street, the home of Sis. Mattie Davis, by a group of former members of Messiah Baptist Church who had dissolved their membership due to dissension and the desire to organize another Baptist church. As the oral traditional has it, the split in the church was due to a difference in appetite in terms of preaching style. It was said that the current pastor of Messiah Baptist Church, Reverend Henry Grady Lyons was not a “fire and brimstone” preacher. On the following Wednesday another gathering was held in the home of Brother and Sister James A. Thomas, 2192 East 73rd Street, at church time the nucleus of the St. Timothy Baptist Church was established. It is also interesting to note that Sister Blanche Newsome is credited with coming up with the name of the church. The founders immediately began orchestrating plans for the organizing of the Sunday school and BYPU Departments were also made. On Thursday, December 5, 1940, St. Timothy Baptist Church was officially established an installation of Reverend Henry Grady Lyons as pastor.

In 1942, the congregation of the Independent Presbyterian Church at 7101 Carnegie Avenue was seeking to relocate. Members of St. Timothy began negotiating for the purchase of the property. Then on February 21, 1943, God’s true and faithful servants marched proudly in their present home. Reverend N. Sylvester Williams preached the

first sermon. Church membership in 1947 was approximately 250 members. Reverend Henry Grady Lyons died on July 26, 1947, after six and one-half years as pastor.

Succeeding Reverend Lyons was Reverend John T. Weeden, who formerly pastored the Eastern Star Baptist Church of Indianapolis, Indiana. Having been called to the pastorate of St. Timothy in December 1947, he officially began his ministry here on the first Sunday in February, 1948. During the more than forty and one half years of his pastorate, the late John T. Weeden Sr., served St. Timothy and the community in an understanding and memorable manner. Pastor Weeden ordained several ministers who later became Pastors. His death, September 17, 1988 ended a glorious period in the history of the church, which will not be forgotten.

Following Reverend Weeden's demise, Reverend Tyree Williams, Assistant Minister of St. Timothy was chosen as interim Pastor from September 1988 - June 1989. Reverend Williams became the third pastor June 8, 1989 in the nearly forty-nine-year existence. Under Reverend Williams' pastorate, ministers were called to be pastors, some ordained and licensed, deacons and trustees were added including women trustees. Reverend Tyree Williams passed away October 6, 2011. He will be remembered as the only son of St. Timothy that became pastor and recognized for his devotion to youth and formal education. For the first time in its rich history, the church embarked upon what would be a national search for its next spiritual leader. I was installed as the fourth pastor of the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church in January of 2014.

The St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church is currently located at 7101 Carnegie Avenue Cleveland, Ohio. The church is located in the inner city of Cleveland. The neighborhood currently is transforming before the eyes of its residents. There is heavy

and aggressive redevelopment going on all around the church. Cleveland Clinic Hospital, which is by far the largest industry in the city, is expanding its territory almost daily. In 2014 the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church was approached about a plot of land that it owned. It was not until 2015 that the church at in its leadership seriously considered selling the property. After discussions with city officials, legal counsel, and prayer, the church decided to sell the property, which made it possible for Dealer Tire which employs approximately 500 people, to stay within the city of Cleveland. Even with the selling of property, St. Timothy still has room for expansion within the community.

The current layout of the church's property is a sanctuary that seats approximately 500 people, a fellowship hall that seats approximately a little over 100 people comfortably, an education wing, state of the art kitchen, five restroom areas, and a food pantry. The building (not including the educational wing which was an old car repair shop) is one hundred and twenty years old. With the age of the building comes some unavoidable wear and tear. A significant amount of the budget goes towards repairs. Overall the sanctuary's beauty is absolutely breathtaking but the rest of the property leaves more to be desired when looking through the aesthetic lenses of the twenty first century.

Before his passing, Dr. Tyree Williams started a capital campaign called the Sinai Project, to extend the structure of the church, which would have added classrooms as well as office space. Although the Sinai Project fund grew exponentially it came at the expense of the general tithes and offerings plummeting.

The present ministry is still carrying on many of the traditions of its rich history. The church is striving to become a cross-generational and cross-cultural church. As God

would have it, during his time at the United Theological Seminary, Dr. Tyree Williams was actually beginning to work towards transitioning the St. Timothy Missionary Baptist Church from being predominately senior citizen based to becoming multigenerational. After reading his dissertation, I prepared myself as God saw fit to be used as a continuum of the work that had already been started. There is nothing wrong with St. Timothy being a traditional church; the issue is that without knowing it, they were practicing traditionalism.

Today, the ministry has become more welcoming of all generations but there are still many areas for improvement. In terms of worship the church has decreased its worship time from three hours to two hours. Under the leadership of a newly established Music and Fine Arts Ministry, the church has adopted a blended worship style merging the contemporary and the traditional. After noticing that the church had barely any members that lived the community, the church is now focusing its time, energy, and resources on rebuilding its relationship with the community. Our goal is to become both a commuter and community church. The church is currently experiencing growth but retention is still an issue for us as a church. Another dynamic that impacts our ministry is weather. Cleveland experiences harsh winters well into March and at times even in April, which has a negative effect on our weekend attendance.

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CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Reconciling the church to its call to serve the community where it is planted is not an easy endeavor. The church as we know it is in an ever evolving state. From the early days of John Wesley, there were circuit churches that slowly gave way to community based churching. From the community based church emerged the commuter based church where people rarely attended the churches within their community and opted to drive to locations outside the community. With the explosion of technology, we are now experiencing the onset of cyber churches where people are attending churches in cyber space.

As one would reflect on the conditions of the inner city and urban communities across America, it becomes readily apparent that a disconnection exists between the inner city and urban churches and the people who live in the community surrounding these churches. In order to meet the relevant needs of the people beyond us, members of the church only have to exit the building to see opportunities for ministry and mission. In spite of this every growing reality, many of the members of our church seem to walk past conditions that God is not proud of as they enter and exit God's holy ground.

This particular project is designed to remedy the ever widening disparity between church members and members of the community surrounding the church. Without saying it, and without a picture for us to see, the church has systematically created and "us

versus them” or a “have versus the have not’s environment.” In order for us to see the harm we have created, our task will begin with an exploration of two specific biblical text that illuminate God’s desire for the church to not only be within the bounds of the community but to also minister to the needs of the people of the community where the church finds itself. Jeremiah 29:1-14 and 1 Corinthians 12: 20-27 will be used to arrest our spirits and cause us to realign our ministry and mission to the priorities of God concerning God’s people and God’s community.

Old Testament Foundation

The story of the Babylonian exile provides a sobering place to being our Old Testament exploration. In an introduction to the book of Jeremiah 29, we find these words, “Chapter 29 is composed mainly of letters that were sent between Jerusalem and Babylon. Jeremiah received information that false prophets in Babylon were telling the exiles they would return home soon. The exiles made little or no effort, therefore, to adjust to their new surroundings for a long stay. Disturbed by their unrealistic attitude, Jeremiah sent a letter exhorting them to settle down, build homes, and plant gardens; for he knew they would be in Babylon many years” (25:11).¹

The central theme for chapter 29 is for the people to realize that where they are currently is where they are going to be for an extended period of time; in fact seventy years. This is a harsh acknowledgement from the word of false prophets who encouraged the people to be ready to leave Babylon relatively soon.

¹ F. B. Huey, “Jeremiah, Lamentations,” vol. 16, in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1993), 250–251.

When chapter 29 is viewed in the context of the entire book, it becomes clear why chapter 29 was written. From all accounts, the prophet Jeremiah was commissioned by God to call the people of Israel or Judah to repentance because of their wayward behavior and idolatrous lifestyle. They were told that if they turned from their ways and began to follow the ways of God, all would be forgiven. However, when it was determined that the people would not heed Jeremiah's advice and continued in their wayward ways, God sent Jeremiah back to Israel with a sobering message of destruction and catastrophe. His message included a strong admonition that not only would the people feel the effects of God's anger, they were expected to submit and take their punishment. This second message from God through the mouth of the prophet Jeremiah caused the people to revolt all the more, accusing Jeremiah of being a traitor. Ultimately, his own people persecuted Jeremiah. His plight was more than any other Hebrew prophet.

Chapter 29 begins the process of appealing to the people of Israel to repent and turn to the Lord. "The calamities which God inflicts upon mankind in this world are intended to bring them to repentance; and though he often removes his rod in anger, when he sees that it does not produce the desired effect, yet he often continues to punish till he sees that the heart is humbled for its iniquity. Thus he dealt with the Jews whom he sent captive to Babylon. They at first despised his chastening, and promised themselves a speedy return to their native land: but he declared that their captivity should be protracted to the end of seventy years; and that, at the expiration of that time, when they should have learned to acknowledge him, he would again appear before them, and bring them back in answer to their fervent petitions."²

² Charles Simeon, "Jeremiah to Daniel," *Horae Homileticae*, vol. 9 (London, UK: Holdsworth and Ball, 1832), 183.

Once the Israelites found themselves exiled in Babylon, in true shepherd form, Jeremiah sends the Israelites a letter to assist them in how to behave and how to win favor in the sight of God while they were captives in a foreign land. “Jeremiah wanted to enlighten the Israelites and encourage them in their life in Babylon. Governed by special laws concerning “clean” and “unclean” things, the Jewish people would have a difficult time adjusting to a pagan society. Jeremiah wanted them to be good witnesses to the idolatrous Babylonians, and he also wanted them to be good Jews even though separated from their temple and its services. He addressed himself to the needs of three kinds of people; those with no hope, those with false hope and those with true hope.³

Verses 4-6 address those with no hope. When the Babylonians captured the Israelites they lost most of the possessions to Babylonian plundering. What they did have they took with them. They were no longer free but captives with little to no means of making a living. They were alienated from their family, friends, and loved ones and some may have even died from the long march from Jerusalem to Babylon. They lost their freedom and were now captives. They had been taken from their homes and had lost their means of making a living. They were separated from relatives and friends, some of whom may have perished in the long march from Jerusalem to Babylon. For them, in a matter of moments they went from freedom to a state of hopelessness.⁴

In verses 6-9 Jeremiah addresses those with false hopes. Among those who lived in Jerusalem and made the journey to Babylon were false prophets who desperately tried to convince the Israelites that their stay in Babylon would be short lived; no more than

³ Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Decisive*, “Bc” Commentary Series (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 123.

⁴ Wiersbe, *Be Decisive*, 123–124.

two years (vs. 8–9). Because the Israelites abandoned their trust in God, they believed the false prophets that there would be no need to settle down and find a new way of life. However, Jeremiah admonished them to find comfort where they were because their stay would be as long as seventy years (v.10). According to Jeremiah, there would be plenty of time to build houses, get married, and have children. It was important that the exiles have families so there would be people available to return to Judea when their time of captivity would end. Little did they know, this remnant of Israelites who found themselves in captivity would become the future of God’s plan of salvation. As a result, the Israelites had to comply with God plan by being fruitful and multiply their race (v. 6).⁵

In verses 10-14 Jeremiah addressed those who had no true hope. True hope does not come from false prophets but from the revealed Word of God; during that time the revealed Word of God came through His prophet Jeremiah. The promise that God gave His people was that he would deliver them when they made up their minds to trust and follow him. When the Israelites changed their ways and began to follow God, their time of captivity would come to an end.⁶

In the entire saga of Jeremiah and the Babylonian captivity, the city becomes an important symbol in the biblical narrative of salvation.

Build houses and dwell *in them*; plant gardens and eat their fruit. Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters—that you may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you

⁵ Wiersbc, *Be Decisive*, 124.

⁶ Wiersbe, *Be Decisive*, 124–125.

to be carried away captive, and pray to the LORD for it; for in its peace you will have peace⁷ (Jer 29: 5-7).

According to Walter Brueggemann Babylon is not a primal or intentional theme in the Bible. "It is an incidental theme that surfaces only as a byproduct of other issues. Moreover, it is not likely that what is said about any ancient city, concrete or anticipatory, is directly pertinent to our urban issues. More specifically, the Bible finally cares only about Jerusalem. In order to make the linkage to our own issues, then, it is necessary to take "Jerusalem" as a free-ranging metaphor for all of our cities."⁸ The cities of today are no different since the time of Jeremiah. It seems that when we consider the cities of today, the church while present, has little power and is estranged from the people.

"Old Testament Jerusalem is a metaphor for the concentration of power and meaning that mirror our own cities. Jerusalem failed and committed to a false ideology, just as our cities are failing. The prophets provide a voice and a program of hope. Jeremiah is an outsider who is regarded as a traitor to the city who undermines the war effort. In his most famous comment, he dared to assert that the hostility of urban propaganda—royal or temple—would never succeed. Security would come only from the ancient Torah practices of neighborliness:"⁹

Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words, "This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord." For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go

⁷ Jeremiah 29:5-7 New King James Version. Unless otherwise notes, all scripture references are from the NKJV.

⁸ Walter Brueggemann, 1999, "The City in Biblical Perspective: Failed and Possible," *Word & World* 19, 236-250, accessed July 9, 2016, *Old Testament Abstracts*, EBSCOhost.

⁹ Brueggemann, "The City in Biblical Perspective," 242.

after other gods to your own hurt, then I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever (Jer 7:3-7).

“Jeremiah asserts a huge “if” over the future of the city, an “if” he had learned from Moses, the “if” of aliens, orphans, and widows. His daring comments got him arrested. He was put on trial, in a scene that anticipates the trial of Jesus. He was opposed in the trial by the entire power structure of the city, especially the religious types, and was about to receive a death sentence. However, the civil leadership resisted the aggressive religious leadership that was surely derived from Zadok the pragmatist. The issue was turned when some “elders of the land,” some of the leaders of village life who had come to the city for the occasion, with their odd perspective reminded the assembly of Micah’s denunciation (26:17-18). The village leaders saved his life because they cited the poet Micah. They remembered that prophets must be heard and honored when they care about the city.”¹⁰

“Surely the Zadokites, wanting to execute him, did not welcome such a disruption of court by appeal to old village tradition. Their distaste for the intrusion of “the elders” must have been acute, for we notice that Jeremiah, the one who spoke of the deathly future of the city, is “of the priests of Anathoth in the land of Benjamin” (1:1). He comes from Anathoth from a priestly family. He belongs to the line of Abiathar. Abiathar had been banished, but his voice could not be silenced. And now, Abiathar speaks yet again, against the self-deceiving arrangements of an urban elite that neglects the neighbor commands of the Torah. The city is not safe when it denies the demands of the neighbor.”¹¹

¹⁰ Brueggemann, “The City in Biblical Perspective,” 242.

¹¹ Brueggemann, “The City in Biblical Perspective,” 242.

St Timothy finds itself in the position of the temple during the day of Jeremiah; it thrives in the community but has little to do with the people of the community. This project seeks to help the church to reconnect itself with the people of the community by inviting them into the life of the church while meeting their relevant needs.

Continuing to explore the importance of the city, especially during times of captivity, Walter Brueggeman writes, “It’s a shocking decree. The slavers were commanded to pray for their captors; to seek the welfare of this foreign city; to invest in real estate and engage in commerce in a land wholly unfamiliar and hostile toward them. It’s unfathomable to think about life as the enslaved cheering for my enslaver. If God commanded Israel to invest in the welfare of their captive city, it makes me wonder how much he desires for us to love, cherish and invest in our neighborhoods and cities which are far from hostile.”¹²

Brueggemann says that there are three English translations of a key phrase in this verse (v 7). “The King James Version says, “Seek the peace of the city.” The New International Version and the English Standard Version says, “Seek the peace and prosperity of the city,” and the New Revised Standard Version is the one I quote, “Seek the welfare of the city.” Obviously, the later translations are trying to get at the meaning of shalom because the English word ‘peace’ has become so watered down in the last four hundred years since King James sponsored his translation.”¹³

When considering shalom in the tradition of the Jeremiah text, it is said that one of “the distinguishing marks of Jeremiah's prophetic opponents is their use of shalom for

¹² Doug Priest, *New Urban World*, “Seek the Shalom of the City,” accessed July 7, 2016, <http://newurbanworld.org/seek-the-shalom-of-the-city/>.

¹³ Priest, “Seek the Shalom of the City.”

the temple in Jerusalem (14:13). Their oracle ran: "*šàlēm* will be yours" (4:10; 23:17); they restored the welfare of the community by speaking shalom oracles (6:14; 8:11). It has often been suggested that these prophets stood in close affiliation with the temple cult. We know in fact of the important role that the cultic prophet played in securing the *shalom* of the individual and the community in Israel."¹⁴

In this role, the prophet functioned both as the preventative of the people in the divine council and as the speaker of the divine oracle. If the intercession of the prophet produced a favorable response, the content of the oracle was shalom. The proximity of Jeremiah's prophetic opponents to the cult in Jerusalem has led many scholars to interpret their prophecy of shalom in light of the complex of traditions associated with that city. According to this view, their assurances of peace were grounded in a false sense of security motivated by the traditions of Zion's inviolability and the election of the Davidic dynasty. One of the more promising developments in this regard has been the recent line of research linking shalom to a broad conception of peace formulated and transmitted in the Jerusalem cultic community."¹⁵

Brueggemann believes that the meaning of shalom goes farther than an expression of peace. According to Brueggemann shalom means wholeness and health. "Shalom refers to the internal peace we have in our soul, spirit, and body. But shalom is even more than that. It applies to our relationships at work and to our relationship with nature and creation. As one author wrote, 'to have shalom is to be whole and healthy in yourself and

¹⁴ Jonathan Paige Sisson, 1986, "Jeremiah and the Jerusalem conception of peace," *Journal Of Biblical Literature* 105, no. 3: 429-442, accessed July 11, 2016, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

¹⁵ Sisson, "Jeremiah and the Jerusalem conception of peace."

in all that challenges you, be it people, the issues of your world, your environment, your society, or be it the problems which are at hand, the problems which await you.”¹⁶

This definition goes to the heart of the problematic issues between St Timothy and the community that it is called to serve. The congregation has a strong and rich heritage and its members are proud participants in its ministries, however, there is a noticeable divide between the church and the members of the congregation. If the church is to make it's mark in the community, it must begin to seek the welfare of the community and begin to meet the relevant need of the people who are marginalized and need the help and support of the church.

“In current missiological terms, to seek the welfare of the city—to seek the shalom of the city—is described as community transformation. The goal of community transformation is: 1) to restore people to a full expression of their humanness as made in the image of God; 2) to promote trusting, reconciled and just relationships with people; 3) to form communities that have a shared vision, a sense of community; 4) to create new institutions and restore existing systems and structures; and 5) to seek God in all that we are and do, so that God's kingdom and glory may become more present on earth as it is in heaven.”¹⁷

From the above statement capsule the goal of St Timothy and this ministry project. It is not enough for the people to go and grow as members of the church if that growth does not emerge in meeting the relevant needs of the people who live in the community. St. Timothy has to embrace the goals of community transformation as

¹⁶ Sisson, "Jeremiah and the Jerusalem conception of peace."

¹⁷ Priest, "Seek the Shalom of the City."

identified above so that the rich history that began in 1940 can continue beyond the lifetime of the current congregation.

New Testament

From seeking the welfare of the city in Jeremiah because of captivity and bondage, our attention shifts to the city of Corinth, a very wealthy city for many different reasons. “Corinth was a very prosperous commercial crossroads. Its location on the Isthmus of Corinth overlooks two ports; Cenchroe and Lechaem. One of the ports leads straight to Asia, the other to Italy, and Corinth in the middle of the two. Merchants shipping goods between Asia and Italy preferred to send their cargo through Corinth. Small ships could actually be carted across the Isthmus; shipments from larger vessels were unloaded, transferred on land to the other side, and reloaded at the other port making Corinth a very major port city. Corinth hosted the Isthmian Games; an athletic festival only second to the Olympic Games in importance.”¹⁸

From the outset, the city of Corinth is a prosperous city much like the city of Cleveland, Ohio. Although prosperous, the people of Corinth have been abusing and have a terrible misunderstanding of spiritual gifts. The main gift that the people were struggling to understand was tongues. So Paul wrote to the people of Corinth to try and correct these misunderstandings. It was very crucial for Paul to write the people of Corinth and correct these misunderstandings and to educate the people of the importance of all the spiritual gifts. The people of Corinth were using this gift from the Holy Spirit to show off, for personal status, instead of using it to glorify God. They would stand up in-

¹⁸ WikiBooks, “Corinthians 12,” accessed July 10, 2016, https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Biblical_Studies/New_Testament_Commentaries/1_Corinthians/Chapter_12.

group meetings speaking in tongues to try and impress the other people. This becomes a real representation of how St Timothy operates within the life of the community.¹⁹ Like the people of Corinth who abused the gifts of the Holy Spirit and used them for personal gain, the members of St Timothy in many ways have misused the gifts contained within the life of the congregation by ignoring the needs of the people who live in the community surrounding the church.

As a part of the writings of the Apostle Paul, teaching on the spiritual gifts was the primary focus of 1 Corinthians 12. This New Testament study will look at the importance of spiritual gifts in the dispensation of ministry to the body of believers and the community at large. Before we get into an exegetical exploration of spiritual gifts and the work of ministry, we will look at the context of 1 Corinthians 12: 20-27.

The previous section (1 Cor 12:1-11) focused on those that felt they did not belong to the body. Now the passage shifts the focus to those who may not question their own place in the body but that of other parts for which they feel they have no need. Body parts that may mistakenly be considered dispensable are referred to in a variety of ways within this passage: those that seem to be weaker (v. 22), less honorable (v. 23), unpresentable (v. 23) or parts that lack(ed) honor (v. 24).²⁰

The TNIV and others end this paragraph with verse 26, but verse 27, like the previous verses, is marked by the semantic domain of the body and its parts, while that language is absent from verses 28–31. Also, the two previous paragraphs each concluded

¹⁹ WikiBooks, “Corinthians 12.”

²⁰ Roy E. Ciampa, and Brian S. Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*,” *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010).

with summarizing references to the body and its parts (12:14, 20). It makes sense to see Paul concluding this paragraph in the same way in verse 27.

The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.²¹

In the 21st verse, Paul changes the discussion from parts of the body to categories of the body to suggest hierarchical assumptions with the head itself and its organs assumed to be of greater value or importance than others. Following this line of thinking, it would suggest that some of those that Paul was addressing actually felt inferior to others in the body. "According to Jerome, "The church has real eyes: its teachers and leaders who see in sacred Scripture the mysteries of God. It also has hands, effective persons who are not eyes but hands. Do they plumb the mysteries of sacred Scripture? No, but they are powerful in works. The church has feet: those who make official journeys of all kinds. The foot runs that the hand may find the work it is to do. The eye does not scorn the hand, nor do these three scorn the belly as if it were idle and unemployed." Paul is not promoting such direct identifications, but the basic point of the allegory (that different people in the church have different roles, all of which are needed) is sound."²²

To further this line of reasoning would suggest that there are those in the body who see themselves as part of the inner circle; the social elite. Since it is impossible to

²¹ Ciampa, and Rosner. *"The First Letter to the Corinthians."*

²² Ciampa, and Rosner. *"The First Letter to the Corinthians."*

determine who was the elite of society, it stands to reason that those who considered themselves the elite of the body would also be knowledgeable and gifted in oratory skills. These persons would also be considered those who were endowed with “with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge” and therefore not lacking “any spiritual gift.”²³ The critical point that Paul is making is that all of the parts of the body are needed to be whole, and yet, no one part can say it can exist apart from the others; all parts are necessary for the body to function.

“Verse 22 begins with a clear adversative, here translated *on the contrary*. The parts that one might be tempted to consider dispensable are those *that seem to be* [i.e., are thought by others to be] *weaker*. That is, they are thought to be “experiencing some incapacity or limitation” or to reflect some “relative ineffectiveness, whether external or inward.” They seem to be weaker, or less impressive, in comparison with some other parts. Paul’s reference to those who seem to be weak “recall to mind God’s choice of what is weak in the world.”²⁴

According to Paul, those who are considered weaker are also necessary for the body to function well. “Chrysostom points out that when he calls them weak and less honorable, he uses the expression, *which seem*; but when he calls them necessary, he no longer adds *which seem*, but himself gives his judgment, saying, *they are necessary*. This, he thinks, is because those parts of the human body are useful to procreation of children and the succession of our race.”²⁵

²³ Ciampa, and Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*.”

²⁴ Ciampa, and Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*.”

²⁵ Ciampa, and Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*.”

Scholars seem to debate the reference to social status based on the language of honor and shame. While scholars agree that the unpresentable parts, which are treated with special modesty, refer in the first place to the sexual organs (v. 23), the question is whether or not Paul is thinking of them (and of the weaker and less honorable parts) as a metaphor for low-status members of the community. “Carson argues that “Paul is not here interested in the varied social strata that made up the Corinthian church, but in the perceived stratification of the [gifts].” It seems not only possible, but even likely, however, that there was a perceived correlation between social stratification and the stratification of the gifts. That may even partly explain how Paul moves so freely from a discussion of the divine distribution of the gifts in verses 4–11 to a discussion of the divine distribution of the members of the body itself in verses 12–27, and to a discussion that identifies people somewhat with the gifts they have received (vv. 28–31).”²⁶ “The thought of treating the parts that we think ... less honorable ... with special honor and those that are unpresentable ... with special modesty reinforces the point of 10:24: ‘No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.’ That was part of doing whatever one did (whether eating or drinking or whatever) ‘all for the glory of God’ (10:31). The following verse points out that when God himself put the body together, he gave greater honor to the parts that lacked it.”²⁷

In verses 24–25 Paul draws the conclusion from the analogy of the body in verses 22–23 that special attention and honor was given to the parts of the body that were considered lacking in honor by dressing them up. God has put the body of Christ together in a similar way.

²⁶ Ciampa, and Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*.”

²⁷ Ciampa, and Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*.”

But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other (1 Cor 12:24-25).

The verb translated *put the body together* suggests, “compounding various elements together.” If it was not good for the man to be alone (Gn 2:18), it is also not good for the parts of the body to be separated or divided from each other. “God put the various parts of the body together in an intentional way. He gives gifts that the body needs to people who might otherwise be thought of as unimportant or dispensable. Sometimes he gives such people especially desirable spiritual gifts. That is, he gives greater honor to the parts that lacked it. It would seem to follow that since God has acted in this way he would be honored when his people also make sure that they give special honor to those who seem to lack it so that honor might be, on the whole, equally shared in the body of Christ.”²⁸

“To fail to give honor to those in need of it would not honor God but bring shame to his name. “All are of equal value; but if there is to be any overcompensation, it is to be for the less favored. The church is not to be like its surrounding society, which always honors those who are already honored. It is to be counter-cultural and bestow the greatest honor on those who seem to be negligible. Large churches must be careful about the human tendency to facilitate the formation of subgroups by means of which those of elevated social status and the appearance of self-sufficiency are able to isolate themselves from those with whom they would not naturally tend to associate. As we have seen, this seems to have happened in Corinth (see e.g., 11:21–22). God put the body together in

²⁸ Ciampa, and Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*.”

such a way that those who experience honor in this life and those who do not are to astound the world by their unity and their concern for one another.”²⁹

If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it (v 26). “Calvin’s comment on verse 23, that Paul argues that we look after our more modest parts because ‘their shame would bring disgrace upon the whole body,’ is clearly informed by this verse. As Lionel Thornton points out, it follows from Paul’s argument ‘that in the body of Christ there are, strictly speaking, no private sufferings. All are shared because there is one life of the whole. Accordingly, wrong done to one member is wrong done to the whole Church, and therefore to Christ Himself.’ Paul’s words here are reminiscent of his argument in 11:3–12, where it was implied that honor and shame were understood to travel upward from the church to Christ and God himself.

While most of the preceding argument has spoken generally in terms of the metaphor of the body and implicitly of the church as a similar organism, at this point Paul wants the precise identity of the implied references to be clear: Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. As Garland observes, “In case the Corinthian’s have not realized it, [Paul] clarifies that he is talking about them.” They themselves are the body he has in mind, and it is not just any body, but the body of Christ. Such memorable descriptions of the church are prominent in the letter and are used by Paul to clinch an ethical argument. In 3:16–17 and 6:19–20 the identifications of the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit are high points in the apostle’s opposition to divisive factions and sexual immorality respectively. In this case, Paul tells each member of the church (each one of you), no matter how humble their social position in the world, that they are not just a part of a peculiar social group (that may seem in the eyes of the world

²⁹ Ciampa, and Rosner, “*The First Letter to the Corinthians*.”

to lack any significance) but instead are a part of Christ, the Lord's own body. That is an incredible honor. It is an honor in which they all participate individually, and it is an honor, which they all share as a group, reinforcing again the solidarity of the members. To dishonor any part of Christ's body would be to dishonor Christ himself.³⁰

Bodies as a Symbol of Faith

The metaphor of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 is detailed in its description of the interdependence of the parts of the body. "John A. T. Robinson says, "Paul uses the analogy of the human body to elucidate his teaching that Christians form Christ's body. But the analogy holds because they are in literal fact the risen organism of Christ's person in all its concrete reality. Thus, to speak of the "body of Christ" without acknowledgment of the bodily experiences of its particular members drains the metaphor of much of its richness."³¹

When we consider the body of Christ, it stands to reasons that the Spirit of God is the one that brings the body of Christ together. Since it is the Spirit of God that brings the body of Christ together, it would be inconsistent with the will of God for members of the body to disembody members who are considered unworthy. Once a person becomes a member of the body, they cannot be unbaptized and therefore, their existence cannot be ignored; no matter how much they are made to feel unwelcome, ostracized, and/or cast out of communities of faith.³²

³⁰ Ciampa, and Rosner, "*The First Letter to the Corinthians*."

³¹ Debra A. Reagan, 2013, "Reclaiming the body for faith," *Interpretation* 67, no. 1: 42-57, accessed July 12, 2016, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

³² Reagan, "Reclaiming the body for faith," 51.

“Christianity’s history of negating the body easily leads to ignoring bodies that are hungry, bodies that are imprisoned, bodies that are abused, and bodies that are sexual. The body of Christ cannot ignore the parable of Jesus in Matthew 25:31-46 concerning ministry to the ‘least of these,’ which includes not only hungry and thirsty bodies, but also those who are ill and imprisoned. When the body of Christ gathers to celebrate the abundance of God’s blessings as symbolized in baptismal water and in Eucharist as a feast of the saints, its members must also remember the growing scarcity of clean water and food for many throughout the world. This includes the ‘food deserts’ within urban areas in the United States, where fresh and nutritious food is not available because of the lack of grocery stores.”³³

“When the body is cast only within the framework of sinfulness, there is no safe haven for talking about bodies violated through abuse and the accompanying pain and suffering. In addition, victims may feel that their anger is sinful, whether it is directed toward God, the perpetrator, or others. Sometimes persons who have suffered abuse are encouraged to ‘willingly share in Christ’s suffering’ or to accept that the abuse is ‘part of God’s purpose’ for them. Many times, they are told that they need to release their anger and, too quickly, that they must forgive those who have violated their bodies, thus re-traumatizing the victim with inappropriate and destructive theology.”³⁴

“Communities of faith have at times hesitated to deal with these issues because of the ramifications of telling the truth, which may well affect a wider number of persons. When the church remains silent about rape and other violent traumas, it colludes with

³³ Reagan, “Reclaiming the body for faith,” 52.

³⁴ Reagan, “Reclaiming the body for faith,” 52.

perpetrators to deny the existence of such violence and abuse. Equal consideration must be given to holding the perpetrators accountable and to requiring that they apologize to their victims and make restitution.”³⁵

“Circumstances of abuse call for listening to those whose bodies have been violated. In the case of sexual abuse, victims need the silence to be broken, regardless of the circumstances: their gender, their age at the time of the abuse, the type of abuse and the context in which it happened, and the relationship of the perpetrator to the victim.”³⁶

Reconciling the church to the community is a necessary component of the shalom community of God. It is necessary because the will of God is for the community of faith to model what it means to be the body of Christ where every persons is valued for their gifts and contribution in building God’s kingdom on earth.

The 21st century communities of faith are not in physical captivity, although there is a sense of bondage based on class, socio-economic status, race, family unity, and fear. Communities of faith are fragmented where each local church is comfortable in meeting the needs of its members at the exclusion of the people who live in the community who are not members, yet depend on the prophetic witness of the church for direction and a greater quality of life as defined by the shalom community.

Jeremiah foretold of what would happen to the Israelites if they did not yield their lives to the will of God. Because the people did not reconcile their lives to God, the Babylonians captured them and carried them away from the holy city of God until they transformed their way of life. Once in bondage, Jeremiah provided a word of encouragement and compelled the people to pray for their captors and assist them in

³⁵ Reagan, "Reclaiming the body for faith." 52.

³⁶ Reagan, "Reclaiming the body for faith." 52.

improving the welfare of the city. True to the prophecy of Jeremiah, as the Babylonians prospered, so did the Israelites. Although they were two separate people groups, a sense of unity permeated the land, which led to them returning to Jerusalem when Persia conquered Babylon. Under the leadership of King Cyrus, the Israelites were allowed to return to Jerusalem.

During the time of the Apostle Paul and the establishing of the church throughout Asia Minor, Paul found it necessary to admonish the people to live in harmony and unity. It is during this time that the importance of being the body of Christ became critical to the survival of the Christians in Corinth and other towns. It was important, especially in Corinth that Jews and Gentiles live together in harmony. Paul's exhortation on the body of Christ became critical, as he wanted the people to realize that all were interrelated and they could only have good success when they operated in unity and harmony based on the word of God.

Today, our society struggles with being unified. The country has adopted a spirit of competition where winning and losing, have and have not's, and "us and them" are the operative ways in which we seek to live. Each of these ways of life is counter cultural to the way that God deemed the more excellent way to live. Therefore, it becomes incumbent upon the church to restore the body of Christ motif in society if we are to truly experience the kingdom of God on earth.

St Timothy, like many inner city churches are guilty of community fragmentation by excluding those in the community who are not a part of the church. This project seeks to correct this mode of thinking and philosophy by encouraging the church to seek the welfare of the neighborhood where it is planted thereby prospering as the neighborhood

prosper. Prosperity in this context means the ability for all to live a greater quality of life where peace, equality, and the needs of all are met through collaborative relationships and meaningful ministry.

Next, we will look at the history of the church since the time of the Reformation to the Post-Modern era.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

This historical foundation begins with the study of the Christian church beginning with the Protestant Reformation. It is said, “The Reformation of the sixteenth century is, next to the introduction of Christianity, the greatest event in history. It marks the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times. Starting from religion, it gave, directly or indirectly, a mighty impulse to every forward movement, and made Protestantism the chief propelling force in the history of modern civilization.”¹

The Protestant Reformation is similar to the first century church; both had an abundance of great and good men, important facts, and permanent results. As far back as Moses and the Prophets, the emergence of what was to become the Christian church emerged on the day of Pentecost. With the Reformation came corruptions of the papacy, the decline of monasticism and scholastic theology, the growth of mysticism, the revival of letters, the resurrection of the Greek and Roman classics, the invention of the printing press, the discovery of a new world, the publication of the Greek Testament, the general spirit of enquiry, the striving after national independence and personal freedom.”²

The sixteenth century was called the age of the renaissance in religion, literature, and art. During the period, there was an asserted effort for the world to regain its sense of

¹ “History of the Christian Church,” accessed July 14, 2016, http://www.ccel.org/s/schaff/history/7_ch01.htm.

² “History of the Christian Church.”

youthfulness. Pessimists and timid conservatives took alarm at the threatened overthrow of cherished notions and institutions, and were complaining, fault-finding and desponding. Luther wrote in 1522:

If you read all the annals of the past, you will find no century like this since the birth of Christ. Such building and planting, such good living and dressing, such enterprise in commerce, such a stir in all the arts, has not been since Christ came into the world. And how numerous are the sharp and intelligent people who leave nothing hidden and unturned: even a boy of twenty years knows more nowadays than was known formerly by twenty doctors of divinity.³

The renaissance that occurred during the Protestant Reformation changed Christian life, and saved the world from a disastrous revolution because of its liberal tendencies and movements. "It was neither a revolution nor a restoration, though including elements of both. It was negative and destructive towards error, positive and constructive towards truth; it was conservative as well as progressive; it built up new institutions replacing the ones it brought down leading to its success."⁴

During the Reformation period, Christendom was divided into two separate systems; Catholicism and Romanism. Catholicism followed the practices of the ancient Oriental church, medievalism, and all modern evangelical churches. Romanism or the Latin Church turned against the Reformation, consolidated by the Council of Trent and completed by the Vatican Council of 1870 with its dogma of papal absolutism and papal infallibility. Mediaeval Catholicism is pre-evangelical, looking to the Reformation; modern Romanism is anti-evangelical, condemning the Reformation, yet holding with

³ "History of the Christian Church."

⁴ "History of the Christian Church."

unyielding tenacity the ecumenical doctrines once sanctioned, and doing this all the more by virtue of its claim to infallibility.⁵

The distinction between pre-Reformation Catholicism and post-Reformation Romanism, in their attitude towards Protestantism, has its historical antecedent and parallel in the distinction between pre-Christian Israel which prepared the way for Christianity, and post-Christian Judaism which opposed it as an apostasy. Catholicism and Protestantism represent two distinct types of Christianity, which sprang from the same root, but differ in the branches. Catholicism is legal Christianity, which served to the barbarian nations of the Middle Ages as a necessary school of discipline; Protestantism is evangelical Christianity, which answers the age of independent manhood. Catholicism is traditional, hierarchical, ritualistic, and conservative; Protestantism is biblical, democratic, spiritual, and progressive. The former is ruled by the principle of authority, the latter by the principle of freedom. But the law, by awakening a sense of sin and exciting a desire for redemption, leads to the gospel; parental authority is a school of freedom; filial obedience looks to manly self-government.⁶

Jewish and Gentile Christianity in the apostolic age marks the difference between the Catholic and Protestant churches; this difference changed the future course of church history. The question of circumcision or the keeping of the Mosaic law, as a condition of church membership, threatened a split at the Council of Jerusalem, but was solved by the wisdom and charity of the apostles, who agreed that Jews and Gentiles alike are "saved

⁵ "History of the Christian Church."

⁶ "History of the Christian Church."

through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 15:11). Yet even after the settlement of the controversy by the Jerusalem compromise Paul got into a sharp conflict with Peter at Antioch on the same question, and protested against his older colleague for denying by his timid conduct his better conviction, and disowning the Gentile brethren. This is in large part why the Roman Church professes to be built on Peter and regards him as the first pope, while the Reformers appealed chiefly to Paul and found in his epistles to the Galatians and Romans the bulwark of their anthropology and soteriology, and their doctrine of Christian freedom. The collision between Paul and Peter was only temporary; and so the war between Protestantism and Romanism ultimately passed away in God's own good time.⁷

Reformation and the Contemporary Church

According to Ronald Osborn, the reformation of the church is an ongoing process. Over and over again, the Word of God stands the test of time and the commands of God continue to ring true in the hearts of those who trust in God's word. From the time of the prophets to today's praying faithful, the winds of God have swept His temple clean. In our own time, we trust, the Spirit stands in creative judgment over the church, ready to work reform and renewal. Yet one such era, symbolized in Luther's posting of the Ninety-five Theses, altered the shape of Western Christendom that we refer to it, uniquely, as the Reformation.⁸

⁷ "History of the Christian Church."

⁸ R. E. Osborn, "Significance of the Reformation for the contemporary church: A Protestant view," *Encounter*, 29(1), 14-24, accessed July 31, 2016, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

The term Reformation is designated to the entire era of those who sought to purify of the church. Scholars posit that Martin Luther will forever be the hero of change, however those who opposed him have stopped being viewed as villains of the movement. Across more than a century of critical scholarship, both secular and ecclesiastical, both Catholic and Protestant, historians have undertaken to give us a balanced understanding of the issues and forces at work in the Reformation. To them we owe a great debt for the new openness and larger insights now possible for us.⁹

One known fact about the Reformation that is tried and proven is that reformation never comes easily. The forces seeking to maintain stability and the pressures for change collide with violence, producing shock, heat, and a dark period in church history during the sixteenth century. While some saints pray for renewal, and relevance, others seek the safety of the temple in keeping everything as it was in quieter times, and still others leave the ministry or renounce the church. The most pressing question for twenty-first century Christians on today regarding the actions of the Reformation is: Can the religious institution be reformed in our time? Or must obedient rebels forsake the church; as we have known it for a form of church, not yet clear to any one's sight?¹⁰

Everyone who has studied church history knows that Luther posted the *Ninety-five Theses* in a typical professorial gesture. Upon it's writing, Luther never intended to initiate a popular discussion, much less a Protestant Reformation, but rather an academic disputation. He expected a scholastic debate, orally or in writing. But his conviction against the exploitation of indulgences ran deep and he couched the theological issue in phrases, which caught the popular ear. Consider two of his last four theses:

⁹ Osborn, "Significance of the Reformation," 14.

¹⁰ Osborn, "Significance of the Reformation," 15.

- 92 - way, then, with those prophets who say to Christ's people, "Peace, peace," where there is no peace.
- 93 - Hail, hail to all those prophets who say to Christ's people, "The cross, the cross," where there is no cross.

A clever publicist saw the potential public interest in Luther's denial of a popularly accepted doctrine. He printed and circulated the theses. Luther would not back down. And the fat was in the fire.¹¹

Since the writing of Luther's 95 Thesis, both Protestant and Catholic churches grew as a result of open discussion of the issues. Leading theologians engaged in public debates in the universities, in ecclesiastical councils, and before the civil authorities. The wars of religion came all too soon, but at the outset the protagonists depended on public persuasion. They explored the most crucial issues of theology in disputations, sermons, and lectures before the burghers of Germany and Switzerland, the courts of England and Scotland. To a large degree, Protestantism gained a foothold or Catholicism retained its following as the people of the towns responded to the preaching.

What happens when Christianity encounters new social movements and new thrusts of creativity? Often the church shows itself rigid and hostile, as did the nineteenth-century papacy or Protestant fundamentalism. Reformation occurs both in church and society when creative interaction occurs between faith and culture. Jesus affirmed of the Law and the prophets, "I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Mt 5:17)—or in the 7 words of Campbell's *Living Oracles* "not to subvert, hut to ratify."¹²

¹¹ Osborn, "Significance of the Reformation," 18.

¹² Osborn, "Significance of the Reformation," 19.

Proponents of the new secularity in our time might well ponder the course of Renaissance humanism. Beginning as an affirmation of this-worldly interests and of the values of classical culture, it protested the negations of monasticism and the pretentious abstractions of theology. In Italy it sometimes seemed anti-Christian. Yet we see a Christian fulfillment of humanistic concerns in Petrarch, Ficino, Pico della Mirandola, and Michelangelo even in Italy; in Ximenes in Spain; and especially in the Northern humanists—Erasmus, Colet, More, Melancthon, Calvin, and many others. The avidity of the humanists for the study of classical languages and literature brought a flowering of biblical studies, while the writings of some of the Reformers established the standards of prose style in the new vernaculars—Luther in German, Calvin in French, Cranmer and the translators of the King James Version in English. The concept of Christian higher education for life in this world through a combination of the classical liberal arts with biblical studies was a major gift of the Reformation to modern culture.¹³

Precursors to and Key Figures in the Reformation

John Wycliffe and John Huss were the major personalities who many scholars agree paved the way for the Protestant Reformation. “John Wycliffe (1330–84) attacked what he saw as corruptions within the church, including the sale of indulgences, pilgrimages, the excessive veneration of saints, and the low moral and intellectual standards of ordained priests. Wycliffe also repudiated the doctrine of transubstantiation, held that the Bible was the sole standard of Christian doctrine, and argued that the authority of the Pope was not grounded in Scripture. Some of Wycliffe's early followers translated the Bible into English, while later followers, known as Lollards, held that the

¹³ Osborn, “Significance of the Reformation,” 20.

Bible was the sole authority and that Christians were called upon to interpret the Bible for themselves. The Lollards also argued against clerical celibacy, transubstantiation, mandatory oral confession, pilgrimages, and indulgences.”¹⁴

John Huss (1369–1415) was a Bohemian priest, who was excommunicated in 1410, and burned at the stake for heresy in 1415. His death leads to the Hussite Wars in Bohemia. Huss followed Wycliffe's teachings closely, translating Wycliffe's *Dialogus* into Czechoslovakian, and modeling the first ten chapters of his own *De Ecclesia* after Wycliffe's writings. He believed in predestination, regarded the Bible as the ultimate religious authority, and argued that Christ, rather than any ecclesiastical official, is the true head of the church.¹⁵

As the Protestant Reformation began to take shape, Martin Luther, Huldreich Zwingli, John Calvin, John Knox, and Henry VIII became its key figures. Luther was known for his 95 Thesis, Zwingli was known for denouncing the sale of indulgences in 1518, Calvin instituted a form of Church government in Geneva, which has become known as the Presbyterian church, Knox became the father of Calvinism and Henry VIII was excommunicated by the pope for marrying Anne Boleyn and having the archbishop of Canterbury sanction the divorce from his first wife, Catherine. In 1534, Henry had Parliament pass an act appointing the king and his successors supreme head of the Church of England, thus establishing an independent national Anglican church.¹⁶

¹⁴ Theopedia, “Protestant Reformation,” accessed July 31, 2016, <http://www.theopedia.com/protestant-reformation>.

¹⁵ Theopedia, “Protestant Reformation.”

¹⁶ Theopedia, “Protestant Reformation.”

Theological Issues of the Reformation

The theology of the Reformers departed from the Roman Catholic Church primarily on the basis of three great principles:

- Sole authority of Scripture
- Justification by faith alone
- Priesthood of the believer¹⁷

Sola Scriptura (by Scripture alone) was one of the watchwords of the Reformation. This doctrine maintains that scripture, as contained in the Bible, is the only authority for the Christian in matters of faith, life, and conduct. The teachings and traditions of the church are to be completely subordinate to the Scriptures. Roman Catholicism, on the other hand, holds scripture and tradition to be of the same inspired deposit of faith.¹⁸

Sola Fide (by faith alone) was the other watchword of the Reformation. This doctrine maintains that we are justified before God (and thus saved) by faith alone, not by anything we do, not by anything the church does for us, and not by faith plus anything else. It was also recognized by the early Reformers that *Sola Fide* is not rightly understood until it is seen as anchored in the broader principle of *Sola Gratia*, by grace alone. Hence the Reformers were calling the church back to the basic teaching of scripture where the apostle Paul states that we are "saved by grace through faith and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," (Eph 2:8).¹⁹

¹⁷ Theopedia, "Protestant Reformation."

¹⁸ Theopedia, "Protestant Reformation."

¹⁹ Theopedia, "Protestant Reformation."

The third great principle of the Reformation was the priesthood of all believers. The scriptures teach that believers are a "holy priesthood," (1 Pt 2:5). All believers are priests before God through our great high priest Jesus Christ. "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Tm 2:5). As believers, we all have direct access to God through Christ; there is no necessity for an earthly mediator. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox concept of the priesthood was seen as having no warrant in scripture, viewed as a perversion and misapplication of the Old Testament Aaronic or Levitical priesthood, which was clearly fulfilled in Christ and done away with by the New Testament.²⁰

As a result of these principles, the Reformers rejected the authority of the Pope, the merit of good works, indulgences, the mediation of Mary and the Saints, all but the two sacraments instituted by Christ (Baptism and the Lord's Supper), the doctrine of transubstantiation, the mass as a sacrifice, purgatory, prayers for the dead, confessions to a priest, the use of Latin in the services, and all the paraphernalia that expressed these ideas. Even though the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches fall within Orthodoxy, as most would define it, conservative Protestants regard much of their teaching beyond the basic tenets as erroneous. In fact, they would say much of it is clearly to be regarded as false teaching which has perverted the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ. In general, evangelical Protestants see the Reformation as simply a call back to biblical Christianity.²¹

²⁰ Theopedia, "Protestant Reformation."

²¹ Theopedia, "Protestant Reformation."

Enlightenment Period

The age of enlightenment began in the midst of the seventeenth century and drew to a climax in the eighteenth. A key feature of Enlightenment was the emergence of modernity. The Enlightenment was an age of self-conscious transformation in the way people thought. Though the term "enlightenment" derives from eighteenth century Germany, the English, French, and many Americans were aware of living in a philosophical age, a *siècle des lumières*, in which mastery of human destiny through reason might be realized. *Sapere aude*, dare to know, was the motto and battle cry of the day. The magnificent discoveries of scientists such as Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton called forth a repudiation of scholastic, deductive systems of thought based upon appeal to authority and an attempt to create a new philosophy, psychology, pedagogy, religion, and, indeed, a total society based upon appeal to reason and experience. From a common vision of potential human liberation from the arbitrary restrictions of inherited intellectual, political, religious, and social systems, there emerged among the most disparate and idiosyncratic individuals "not a doctrine, but a campaign for world renovation based on certain broad presuppositions which are informed above all by the achievements of the new science."²²

The Cartesian system was the beginning of the effort to reconstruct thought and grew to dominate the mind of the eighteenth century. During this period Descartes held the line on the deductive method of self-evident axioms that were used to satisfy the empirical hunger of the age. John Locke's empirical and sensational philosophy provided the inspiration and the influence for the later enlightenment. Denying Descartes' view that

²² Samuel C. Pearson, 1977, "Enlightenment influence on Protestant thought in early national America." *Encounter* 38, no. 3: 193, accessed July 31, 2016, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

mathematical reasoning provides the model for all knowledge, Locke moved toward empiricism, which was to illuminate at least a century of Western thought.²³

Experience was to be the watchword of the era and truth the goal. "If I have anything to boast of," wrote Locke to his friend Anthony Collins "it is that I sincerely love and seek truth with indifferency that it pleases or displeases." Just as the old science resting on the hoary authority of Aristotle had fallen before the critical observation of Newton, so did the old systems of philosophy and theology resting on the authority of Catholic and Protestant scholastics were to fall before the critical observation of the new philosophers and their philosophes. Pierre Bayle's historical criticism is illustrative of their general mode of attack. In Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet's *Discourse on Universal History*, "the last great attempt at a purely theological presentation of history," Bayle detected a fatal flaw. As Cassirer explains:

The truth of the facts on which Bossuet builds can only be assured by a logically vicious circle. The authority of all historical facts, according to Bossuet, is based on the authority of the Bible. The authority of the Bible in turn rests on that of the Church, whose authority rests on tradition. Thus tradition becomes the foundation of all historical certainty—but the content and value of tradition can only be proved on the basis of history.²⁴

In an effort to free himself and his age from this flaw in historical reasoning, Bayle separated history from theology and subjected to critical examination both theological tradition and secular history. Bayle's achievement in the liberation of history was to be repeated by the new philosophers in the study of the laws, society, aesthetics, and religion.²⁵

²³ Pearson, 1977, "Enlightenment influence on Protestant thought," 194.

²⁴ Pearson, 1977, "Enlightenment influence on Protestant thought," 194.

²⁵ Pearson, 1977, "Enlightenment influence on Protestant thought," 194.

Such a movement inevitably found itself in a struggle with Christianity as church, theology, and worldview. Rediscovering antiquity as a source of its thought, the Enlightenment used antiquity to struggle from the hold of medieval and early modern Christendom. Dialectically playing the one source of its thought against the other, the Enlightenment struggled toward mastery of both. This is not to say that the Enlightenment escaped its Christian past. Indeed, the subtle ambiguity of the Enlightenment's relationship to its immediate past was never clear in this great era of clarity, and this same lack of clarity has contributed to the vitality of scholarly conflict about the era ever since. Though they often speak in terms of emancipation from Christianity, the philosophes, as Carl Becker has reminded us, "betray their debt to medieval thought without being aware of it." They denounced Christian philosophy, but rather too much, after the manner of those who are but half emancipated from the 'superstitions' they scorn.²⁶

Because Christian authority appeared to have been one of the more effective instruments of the seventeenth century for the preservation of the status quo, the pre-scientific systems of thought and the social inequities against which the philosophes criticized, it was attacked vigorously. Whether through the satire of Voltaire, the infuriating historiography of Gibbon, or the more genteel challenge of the deists with their watchmaker god, the attack upon inherited Christian systems of thought and institutions was incessant. There was no scarcity of defenders of Christianity, but they immediately took the defensive. Perhaps they were forced into a defensive stance by the sterility of inherited orthodoxy and the awesome appeal of the new science to Christians no less than to philosophes. Perhaps they were too quickly convinced by the argument of

²⁶ Pearson, 1977, "Enlightenment influence on Protestant thought," 196.

Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* and thereby blinded to the equally profound and more disquieting message of Pascal. In any event, the defenders of the faith were troubled by a crisis of confidence and driven by "the honest conviction that churches must, after all, move with the times." Peter Gay says, "the treason of the clerks" became the concession of the English-speaking world. The Enlightenment defined the problems and established the matrix in which they would be considered. The Enlightenment determined what would and would not be admitted as evidence. And the Enlightenment rendered judgment in the issues before the court.²⁷

Christianity's vulnerability was heightened by the confessional divisions, which had resulted from the sixteenth century Reformation and by the subsequent inability of religious leaders to transcend sectarian hostilities. In England the violence and intensity of religious feeling in the seventeenth century which had legitimated revolution, regicide, persecution, and all manner of evil turned enlightenment figures against all suggestions of enthusiasm and against those traditional religious institutions and ideas, which appeared to foster such enthusiasm. Voltaire's sarcastic deism is well known; equally important for the age is Locke's profound commitment to reason and toleration. Both men were reacting to the intolerance and violence of Europe's immediate religious past.

Aside from the more general attack upon theological and ecclesiastical efforts to control thought and society, the Enlightenment challenged Christianity to clarify and justify its position in many crucial areas of thought. Three of these were the relationship of reason and revelation, theodicy, and the relationship of morality and religion. Among the challengers, the defenders, and the accommodators one finds a remarkable variety of approaches and arguments but considerable agreement that these are the particularly

²⁷ Pearson, 1977, "Enlightenment influence on Protestant thought," 196.

vulnerable areas in which Christian theology must clarify and defend itself if it was to survive and prosper.²⁸

Modern Christianity

“It was inevitable that once the Roman Catholic church's power was broken, others would want to free themselves from the rule of the Lutheran (Germany) and Reformed (Switzerland, Holland, and England) Churches and the Church of England. The Puritans were the greatest source of free churches in modern Christianity. At first this was a movement in the Church of England that wanted to purify the Church (of Catholic dogma, not necessarily purity of life). When this failed, others arose, called "Separatists," who determined that if they could not reform the Church, they would form their own. These Puritans turned Separatists went in all directions, but primarily to Holland and the New World, which provided tremendous opportunity to escape religious persecution.²⁹

As a result of the Puritans Separatists separating from the Church of England, other churches began to follow their lead. “In England in the 16th century, George Fox founded ‘societies of friends’ all over England who would become known as Quakers. In the 18th century, Anglican priest John Wesley founded societies of ‘Methodists’ in the new world. While he intended them to remain part of the Church of England, it was

²⁸ Pearson, 1977, "Enlightenment influence on Protestant thought," 196.

²⁹ Paul F. Pavao, "Modern Christianity: The Era of the Free Churches," accessed July 31, 2016, <http://www.christian-history.194.org/modern-christianity.html>.

apparent to all others that they would not. They rapidly became their own denomination.”³⁰

“One of the more major free churches of modern Christianity, of course, is the Baptist church. Both Brethren and Baptist writers have tried to trace their ancestry to the 1st century in books like *The Trail of Blood* and *The Pilgrim Church*, but there is no validity to these claims. The history of the Church is like a tree with many branches. They all have one trunk. The founders of Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Quakers, and Plymouth Brethren were all former Catholics, Anglicans, or Puritans. Groups like the Novatianists, Albigensians, and Waldensians all left the catholic churches in prior centuries and left no descendants.”³¹

The Baptist denominations are descended from British Separatists, though they did adopt the Anabaptist practice of rebaptizing converts from the Churches practicing infant baptism (which included all the major Reformation churches). In fact, it is likely this influence came to the Baptists through Mennonite (a Dutch branch of the Anabaptists) influence upon John Smyth and Thomas Helwys around 1608 to 1610. Some of the most notable 19th and early 20th century missionaries and teachers were of Brethren descent. Men and women like Hudson Taylor, C. T. Studd, Amy Carmichael, Jim Elliott, George Mueller, and Watchman Nee all were strongly brethren influenced. Pentecostal churches did not arise until the 20th century, sparked by the Azusa Street Revival in the Los Angeles area in 1906.³²

³⁰ Pavao, “Modern Christianity.”

³¹ Pavao, “Modern Christianity.”

³² Pavao, “Modern Christianity.”

“There are many influences responsible for the state of modern Christianity in the 20th century. There was a tendency to liberal theology among Protestants and Catholics in the 19th century, influenced—in the opinion of many historians—by the rising authority of science. This liberal theology questioned things like the authorship of the books of the Bible and standard interpretations of history. It also rebelled against strict interpretations of doctrine and dogma. By the early 20th century, however, this led to a backlash against liberal theology and fundamentalism arose. Fundamentalists wanted a return to a strict, enforceable orthodoxy and to renewed reverence for the Bible. Fundamentalists have become a powerful force in American religion and politics, though they have had very little influence in Europe.”³³

One of the largest influences on our twenty-first century modern Christianity, however, is the 1960's rebellion against all types of established authority in America. The rising emphasis on individualism led to a rapid increase in the number of denominations as well as to an increase in unchurched or home-churched Christians. It has also led to many unusual (from a historical standpoint) worship methods, with even rock and roll music becoming part of Christian worship. Today it remains to be seen what will become of are new information age. The rise of the Internet has given voice to numerous people who would have had no audience at all thirty years ago, or very little. What effect this will have on Christianity, as we know it is hard to predict.³⁴

³³ Pavao, “Modern Christianity.”

³⁴ Pavao, “Modern Christianity.”

Postmodernity

The specter of what has come to be known as “postmodernism” has haunted the field of religion now for over three decades. In his 1986 American Academy of Religion presidential address entitled “The House of Intellect in the Age of Carnival,” for example, noted theologian and literary theorist Nathan A. Scott denounced the fast-rising phenomenon as a new kind of barbarism undermining accepted academic canons of rationality and discursive civility. As the “porno” trend in the humanities peaked around the turn of the new millennium and began to fracture into numerous specialized methods and topic areas encompassing everything from postcolonial and queer theory to Lacanian readings of texts to identity politics, the study of religion appeared to have become somewhat jaded with what had been its own torchbearer for two decades—the movement identified concurrently as “a/theology,” “death of God theology,” and “deconstructionism.”³⁵

The Church in A Post Modern Era

There is a growing sense that the worldview of the modern age, beginning with the Enlightenment in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, has become inadequate. The modern worldview that the mind can understand the world, that science and the scientific method is the primary path to truth, and that we can have confidence in the ability of humanity to control and improve the world has been regarded as the norm for human society for the past two hundred years. It is this understanding that is increasingly seen as

³⁵ Carl A. Raschke, 2014. “The allure of decadent thinking: religious studies and the challenge of post-modernism.” *Journal Of The American Academy Of Religion* 82, no. 2: 564-566, accessed July 31, 2016, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

inadequate for the world today. The growing sentiment is that humanity can and must go beyond the modern if they are to find answers for the perplexing problems forced upon us by the modern world itself.³⁶

The modern era simply has not provided the answers we thought we were going to get through subjecting the world to scientific analysis. According to Diogenes Allen, the pillars of Western society erected during the Enlightenment are crumbling. He notes four areas in which this breakdown is evident.

1. It can no longer be claimed as a commonly accepted philosophical and scientific tenet that we live in a self-contained universe. This being true, there is no philosophical and scientific basis for excluding the possibility of God.
2. The modern world has failed to find a basis for morality and society. The quest of the Enlightenment to base morality and society on reason rather than on religion has clearly failed. This approach has left us where each person decides what is right and what is wrong.
3. The belief in inevitable progress spawned by the modern age is now seen to be unfounded. While modern science has improved our world, it has not led to inevitable progress. We still face problems, which seem to have become even greater in the modern age—crime, pollution, poverty, racism, and war.
4. The assumption of the Enlightenment that knowledge is inherently good is being questioned. Today we are increasingly aware that new knowledge does not necessarily lead to its beneficial use and may even lead to abuse.³⁷

The crumbling of these pillars of Western civilization has not left us mourning in the dust but rather has cleared the way for us to see things in a new light. A change of attitude and practice now taking place is seen as offering new hope.

Some general characteristics of modernism and postmodernism are helpful in understanding the shifts taking place. In modernism, the emphasis has been on the use of

³⁶ Merritt Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry in a postmodern era," *Lexington Theological Quarterly* 27, no. 3: 73-79, accessed July 31, 2016, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

³⁷ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 73.

reason and analysis, the primary form of which is theory and concepts. In postmodernism the emphasis is on imagination and vision, the primary form of which is hopes, dreams, and aspirations. In modernism the emphasis has fallen on domination and mastery, while in postmodernism the emphasis falls on cooperation, mutuality, and the mending of creation. Modernism emphasizes independency and individuality, which results in an emphasis on nationalism. Postmodernism emphasizes interdependence, which results in an emphasis on the global-community characteristics of society, and the working together for a more just and peaceful world. In modernism competition is the chief aim or value; in postmodernism it is cooperation. Modernism is characterized by dichotomization and duality; postmodernism is characterized by an emphasis on complementarity.³⁸

The contrast given above may indeed mean that we have entered a postmodern era, but even so, it is an era that is still developing. Evidence of this is seen in the fact that it is not a single postmodern understanding and response which has emerged. "The term postmodern is used in a confusing variety of ways, some of them contradictory to others. According to David Griffin, two opposing philosophical ways of responding to the postmodern era are "deconstructive postmodernism" and "constructive postmodernism." Deconstructive postmodernism overcomes the modern worldview by deconstructing the ingredients necessary for a worldview. God, self, purpose, and meaning, a real world, and truth and correspondence are eliminated. This results in a radical relativism or even nihilism."³⁹

Constructive postmodernism does not seek to overcome the modern worldview "by eliminating the possibility of worldviews as such, but by constructing a postmodern

³⁸ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 74.

³⁹ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 74.

worldview through a revision of modern premises and traditional concepts." This constructive postmodernism does not reject "science as such but only that scientism in which the data of the modern natural sciences are alone allowed to contribute to the construction of our worldview."⁴⁰

This leads us to expect that the theological response to postmodernism would also be varied and even at times contradictory. There is no single postmodern theology but rather a variety of postmodern theologies. Some postmodern theologies are deconstructive and result in relativism. Others are constructive and seek to transcend and go beyond the modern emphasis on individualism, consumerism, nationalism, and militarism, to build a new worldview. That there are a multitude of responses can be seen in liberation theology, which is an attempt to do theology in a postmodern world.⁴¹

Taken in a constructive way postmodernism has some important contributions to make to church and ministry. The dividing wall of science and reason, which had placed religion in an altogether separate world, is destroyed. All knowledge, even scientific knowledge, is seen as arising out of a tradition of beliefs. "The whole work of modern science rests on faith commitments which cannot themselves be demonstrated by the methods of science. Some scientists have increasingly recognized that there is a mystery at the heart of existence. The faith commitments of religion thus can no longer be seen as irrelevant to the modern world. It becomes a matter of which faith commitments one is

⁴⁰ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 74.

⁴¹ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 74.

going to make. This postmodern understanding is encouraging for Christians who have felt that religious beliefs were somehow less valid because they were not scientific.⁴²

Christians can have a new boldness to proclaim that the gospel is true; that the Christian worldview provides a better plausibility structure with which to look at the world and reality than does the scientific tradition; that what it holds to be true is not simply a matter of personal opinion but is "the truth which is true for all." It is truth to be commended "to all people in the hope that, by the witness of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of others, it will come to be seen by them for themselves as the truth."⁴³

In the postmodern world, Christians can and must be bold to proclaim the truth. This is not a claim to possess the absolute truth, but rather the claim to be able to point where guidance can be found for the common search for truth. In Jesus Christ of Nazareth the absolute truth has been made present amid the relativities of human cultures. The form, which this has taken, does not permit the church to be imperialistic in its claim but rather is patterned after the powerlessness of the one who died on the cross. Christian values can be affirmed with new strength. We do not have to drown in a sea of relativism. Over against the scientific tradition which can offer no higher good than that which is reasonable and socially utilitarian, the Christian tradition can point to the God who has acted in historic events to reveal and effect God's purpose for all. Adherence to Christian values then is not simply a matter of personal preference, but a matter of living out the purpose of God for all humankind in the world.⁴⁴

⁴² Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 75.

⁴³ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 75.

⁴⁴ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 75.

Christian mission can be undertaken with new vigor and without shame. Modern theological understandings, which relativize all religions and place the emphasis on a tradition of reason can be seen to have no higher or better claim to the truth than the Christian tradition which see the whole purpose of God for human beings revealed and effected through the crucified, risen, and reigning Christ. "The logic of mission is this: the true meaning of the human story has been disclosed. Because it is the truth, it must be shared universally. It cannot be private opinion." For Christians to make the affirmation that God has acted decisively in Jesus Christ is not arrogance. "It is the enduring bulwark against the arrogance of every culture to be itself the criterion by which others are judged."⁴⁵

With new imagination and vision Christians can set themselves to the task of working with the oppressed in the struggle for life and reversing the abuses of the environment. Western interpretations of biblical doctrines, which have been the basis for dominance and mastery, can be looked at with new imagination to understand the mutual, communal, and relational emphases that are there. We can have hope that those who have been ignored and marginalized will find themselves included in the gospel because it embraces and affirms them from within their own context. And we can hope that because of the postmodern way of looking at things real changes will be made in the lives of both the oppressed and the oppressors; that the long abuse of the environment will cease as we give attention to the complementary role that is ours in God's creation.⁴⁶

Often without permission and always with much violence and darkness, the Church continues to press its way forward amid changing conditions and the human

⁴⁵ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 75.

⁴⁶ Watson, 1992, "Reflections on church and ministry," 76.

realities of life. We have looked at the church since the Reformation and with each successive period, scholars and theologians have emerged to define the church and make it relevant for the people of its age. Today we are again in the throws of a possible Reformation of sorts. Megachurches, multi-site churches, and virtual churches have emerged to change the framework and methodology of how we approach the throne of God in this the twenty-first century.

With the change in the topography and landscape of the church, issues of commuter and communal churches have become issues that are straining the very fabric of modern day churchgoers. Especially in inner city and urban centers in America, the decision to attend churches in the local community or drive to locations as far as an hour away has caused many smaller churches to rethink its mission and purpose. The challenge has been and continues to be meeting the needs of those who live around the church while at the same time being faithful to those who drive in for worship.

The dust has not settled yet, however, if history is any indication of future action, it seems that the struggle to maintain vital and sustainable congregations will face uncertain consequences in the years to come.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

This section begins with a basic definition and understanding of church and community. In order for the church to live out its Christian commitment in the life of the community in which she finds herself, it is important for her to understand her role in the life of the community. Without a succinct understanding of the role of the church in the life of the community, the church will, over time, become an invisible institution that has little relevance to the ongoing needs of the people who live and depend on the resources derived from the community. Therefore, we will start this section with an exploration of Black Theology and its impact on the Black church and the Black community.

Black Theology and Black Liberation Theology

According to the Black Theology Project, Black theology can be defined as “*Black*—because enslaved foreparents appropriated the Christian Gospel and articulated its relevance to our freedom struggle with incisive accents that Black women and men have sounded ever since; *Theology*—because our people's perception of human life and history begins with God, and works in the person of Jesus Christ for liberation from every bondage.”¹

¹ Black Theology, Project, “Message to the Black Church and community,” *The Journal Of Religious Thought* 34, no. 2 (September 1977): 24, accessed February 10, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

The Black Theology Project expands its understanding and articulation of Black theology by saying that Black theology is "God talk" that expresses experiential encounters with God despite the varied challenges of life. The results of these encounters are thus translated as the "Good News" about who God is and how God blesses His people through the work of Jesus Christ in the world.²

Black theology is formulated by comparing the experiences of the biblical narrative and the experience of marginalized and oppressed people. Therefore, Black theology is the mechanism that holds the church and community together as members grow spiritually, compelling them to serve the community inclusive of those who are members and those who have yet to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.³

A clear definition of Black theology was first given formulation in 1969 by the National Committee of Black Church Men:

Black theology is a theology of Black liberation. It seeks to plumb the Black condition in the sight of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that. The Black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievements of Black humanity. Black theology is a theology of "Blackness." It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipated Black people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says "No" to the encroachment of white oppression.⁴

The above definition with respect to Blackness is not to be misunderstood as anti-white reactionary theology, rather the word Blackness in the context of Black theology refers to all people of color who have been oppressed and other people groups who have

² Black Theology, Project, "Message to the Black church and community," 24.

³ Black Theology, Project, "Message to the Black church and community," 24.

⁴ Anthony B. Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology: The Bible and the Black Experience in America* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2010), 18.

been marginalized such as homosexuals.⁵ The point being made in reference to the definition of Black theology is that Black theology is not an attack on whites, racism, or other forms of privilege by the majority culture; rather, Black theology seeks to speak to the salvific work of God in Jesus Christ in the lives of Black and other oppressed people.

Black liberation theology, which is different from Black theology is an attempt to apply theology that affirms the humanity of Black people in ways they were previously denied. In this wise, Black people are taught to move beyond victimization and the perpetual belief in racial identity born out of self-loathing and anxiety. When Black people develop a path forward changing their social mores, they will spend less time on racism and increase the possibility of reconciliation and positive mobility.⁶

Victimology in many ways helped set the stage for liberation theology by rejecting “white” theology for a method that distinctively speaks to the experience of Black people inclusive of the plight of Black women articulated in womanist theology. Using Black liberation theology, people of African descent can contextualize the redemptive story in the Black experience, therefore, enabling them to see the will of God for human persons and creation, personally, and structurally as revealed in scripture.⁷

James Cone provides a historical perspective on Black theology and Black liberation theology in that he says that when he began to write about Black theology and Black liberation theology, he was unaware of the origins of liberation in the Third World, especially Latin America. He also confessed to know little about the history of liberation

⁵ Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology*, 18.

⁶ Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology*, 18.

⁷ Bradley, *Liberating Black Theology*, 15.

of African American and their cultural history. His primary goal in the beginning was to provide a balance or a counter-weight for racism in America.⁸

Cone goes on to say that his humble beginnings about Black theology and Black liberation theology were rejected because many white theologians viewed it as racism in reverse. He made a fresh start using the words of Malcolm X: “Don’t let anybody who is oppressing us ever lay the round rules. Don’t go by their games; don’t play the game by their rules. Let them know that this is a new game, and we’ve got some new rules...”⁹

In *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation*, Cone takes the time to identify Black power as essential for establishing a Black theology. Cone says the meaning of “Black” was defined primarily by the menacing presence of whites, which no African American could escape. He recalls his life growing up under the oppressive arm of white America and the segregated south. As Cone chronicles his experiences growing up, he was uniquely troubled by the double standards that were observed by whites and Blacks who both professed a faith in Jesus Christ and considered themselves Christian. Overtime, Cone could not bare the stark contrast and sought answers which led him to seminary and later a PhD degree in systematic theology. After receiving his degree in systematic theology and becoming a student of various theologians, both white and Black, he also was captivated by the veracity of Malcolm X who introduced him to the Black resistance movement and Black power. From these encounters, Cone affirms the definition of Black power as the responsibility of Black people to take responsibility

⁸ James Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 40th ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), Kindle.

⁹ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Kindle.

for their lives.¹⁰ This definition not only compels Black people individually, but also collectively, from church to church and from community to community. If the people of the Black community are to care for the people of the community and seek to meet their welfare, it begins with an understanding of who we are as Black people according to the word and will of God. When we are assured of who we are and whose we are, we are thus able to care for the people of the community as we are being cared for God.

By understanding the definition of Black theology and Black liberation theology, the task of developing a theology for the Black community is made easier. The goal in the development of a theology for the Black community is based on the empowerment of the people to take charge of their own lives while seeing themselves portrayed in the larger narrative of salvation history as outlined in scripture. Now we will move from a theology of a people to a theology of the community in which the people dwell.

Martin Luther King and the Beloved Community

According to Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., the “Beloved Community” was central to Martin Luther King’s theology and subsequent movement in the African American community, which ultimately moved him and the movement to center stage in America. Although King studied liberalism and personalism as a part of his formal doctoral education, his unwavering faith in the community was the bedrock of his theology and philosophy. King absolutely believed that in the midst of chaos and confusion, the Black community could find ways to reconcile and restore its sense of

¹⁰ James Cone, *Risks of Faith: The Emergence of a Black Theology of Liberation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2010).

purpose and unity. The concept of the Beloved Community can be traced back to King's writings, essays, and his love for the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr.¹¹

In one of his first published articles he stated that the purpose of the Montgomery bus boycott "is reconciliation, . . . redemption, the creation of the beloved community." In 1957, writing in the newsletter of the newly formed Southern Christian Leadership Conference, he described the purpose and goal of that organization as follows: "The ultimate aim of SCLC is to foster and create the 'beloved community' in America where brotherhood is a reality. . . . SCLC works for integration. Our ultimate goal is genuine intergroup and interpersonal living—integration." And in his last book he declared: "Our loyalties must transcend our race, our tribe, our class, and our nation . . ."¹² The notion of the Beloved Community is central to the establishment in bridging the gap between the church and the community in today's times. According to the writings and theology of King, the church and community cannot survive without a faithful and total integration of purpose and will. Social life and religious life according to King must be inseparable and the people must meet the needs of both the church and community if either is to become vital and sustainable over time.

King's vision for the community, unlike many of his contemporaries was based on a positive form of desegregation that led to integration, where all people regardless of race, color and national origin would be able to live together in mutuality and harmony. His contemporaries while wanting desegregation had a narrow view of its implications based on their history of negative experiences that placed African Americans in a second-

¹¹ Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., "Martin Luther King's Vision of the Beloved Community, *Religion on-line*, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=1603>.

¹² Smith and Zepp, "Martin Luther King's Vision."

class citizen status. With a vision of the Beloved Community, unity would emerge as the backbone of all people. In many ways, the church due to classical conditioning has been co-opted into forms of segregation where they intentionally or unintentionally separated themselves from the community around them. Kings vision was the dismantling of segregation in all its forms for a more abundant and inclusive live based on the Beloved Community, which included positive desegregation and integration as a way of life.

King believed that desegregation could be possible through the passage of laws; however, integration would only be possible through a change of mind and heart which cannot be legislated. With an integrated ordering of life, Blacks and whites could be unified bring about a very different kind of society.¹³

Behind King's conception of the Beloved Community lay his assumption that human existence is social in nature. "The solidarity of the human family" is a phrase he frequently used to express this idea. "We are tied together in the single garment of destiny, caught in an inescapable network of mutuality," he said in one of his addresses. This was a way of affirming that reality is made up of structures that form an interrelated whole; in other words, that human beings are dependent upon each other. Whatever a person is or possesses he owes to others who have preceded him. As King wrote: "Whether we realize it or not, each of us lives eternally 'in the red.' " Recognition of one's indebtedness to past generations should inhibit the sense of self-sufficiency and promote awareness that personal growth cannot take place apart from meaningful

¹³ Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., "Martin Luther King's Vision."

relationships with other persons, that the "I" cannot attain fulfillment without the "Thou."¹⁴

In the book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, Walter Rauschenbusch, writes, "The social gospel needs a theology to make it effective, but theology needs the social gospel to vitalize it."¹⁵ Therefore, the Christian message is just as critical today as it was years ago because poor and oppressed people still have an intrinsic need to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ. King's message is a message of hope and still remains important today as the African American community continues to suffer the vestiges of various social ills, many of which are caused by the disconnection of the church and the people of the community. Rauschenbusch understood the need to bridge the gap between spiritual work and work in the real world. Thus, just as Chicago Theological Seminary has adopted as their theme, "Ministry for the real world," it speaks to the continual need to keep the gospel message alive and rooted in the lives of the people it is attempting to serve.¹⁶

According to Trussell Rauschenbusch's theology influenced King similar to Niebuhr's Christian Realism because of its rationality in applying theology to the world. King was concerned, not just for the soul of the individual but for the holistic well being of the entire person—mind, body and spirit. The dichotomy between the sacred and the secular in King's theology, moved him way beyond, just a civil rights leader, but rather it catapulted him to the entire world stage.

¹⁴ Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr., "Martin Luther King's Vision."

¹⁵ Jacqueline Trussell, "The Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr." *BlackandChristian.com*, accessed May 5, 2017, <http://blackandchristian.com/articles/academy/trussell-01-02.shtml>.

¹⁶ Trussell, "The Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr."

King's God enabled him to see the interrelatedness of all humankind. In *Strength to Love*, he wrote,

In a real sense, all life is interrelated. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I'm what I ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality.¹⁷

Thus King was at the forefront and in some ways, Trussell propose, a pioneer in interreligious dialogue, having adopted Mohandhas Gandhi's non-violent philosophy, but King also saw that, as the Rev. Willie Barrow says, "we are not so much disunited as we are disconnected."¹⁸

Finally, King's vision of the Beloved Community is essential in transforming African American communities all over American. If African American communities can embrace the work that was previously started by King and capitalize on the integration of social and religious life with the community we can begin to bridge the gap and solve many of the social ills that continue to plague our communities.

A Theology of Community

According to Proverbs 18:21, we are told, "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits." This passage of scripture is very fitting for our discussion of a theology of community. M. Scott Peck says,

In our culture of rugged individualism—in which we generally feel that we dare not be honest about ourselves, even with the person in the pew next to us—we bandy around the word "community." We apply it to almost any collection of individuals—a town, a church, a synagogue, a fraternal organization, an

¹⁷ Trussell, "The Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr."

¹⁸ Trussell, "The Theology of Martin Luther King, Jr."

apartment complex, a professional association—regardless of how poorly those individuals communicate with each other. It is a false use of the word.¹⁹

So what does it mean to be in community if the words we so frequently use are false at best? Peck says that if we are going to use the word community in a useful way we must learn to community honesty with each other about the relationship we establish. We must be willing to make a concerted commitment to rejoice, mourn, and delight with each other while making others' condition our own. In this wise, Peck defines community as being more than the sum of its parts, its individual members. It is a realm where words fall short to form a suitable definition. Community according to Peck is multifaceted where each facet is a mere aspect of a whole that defies description. Finally, each facet is interconnected and interrelated. No one could exist without the other. Persons who make up the community create each other and make each other possible.²⁰

Next, community must be inclusive and not exclusive, however, in most communities separation, divorce, cultural barriers, social barriers, race and other cliques form bastions against the very nature of the community they seek to create. While true communities are to be inclusive, most find it difficult to arrive at this designation. It does not matter if the community is long-term or short-term; most communities find it easier to be exclusive rather than inclusive. To Peck's point, the definition of community is usually a false use of the word.²¹

¹⁹ M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*, accessed February 3, 2017, <http://www.entcom.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Entcom-WS-Report-Annex2.pdf>.

²⁰ Peck, *The Different Drum*.

²¹ Peck, *The Different Drum*.

To this point, we have discovered that many people live in well-defined spaces that are called communities when based on the definition of community they fail to measure up. This is an important point as this project seeks to reconcile the church to serve the needs of the community where it's planted. If the people of the community, especially the Black community, are not able to come together and deal with its issues in an inclusive manner, the community will never reach the level of unity necessary to collectively meet the varying needs that exist.

Regardless of the quest for inclusivity, no community can expect to be in perpetual good health. What can be expected under the best of cases is for the community to reflect on the actions that occur within its bounds and begin to take measures to heal itself. Similarly, community does not form instantaneously, rather after considerable hard word. Once the community has formed and succeeds at its members feeling safe within its gates, it will experience a level of vulnerability that makes it stronger. Over time, and as more vulnerability is possible, trust and stability emerge as defining attributes of a healthy and safe community.²²

In the November 2007 article by Jim Guin entitled, "The New Perspective: A Theology of Community," Guin defines community as *koinonia*, the Greek word also translated as fellowship, communion, sharing, contribution, or participation. He then defines church as *ekklesia*, which derives from the Greek root words for "called out," but which really means "called together." He says, "In each case where a group of people is

²² Peck, *The Different Drum*.

called an ekklesia, they were not merely roused from their homes, they were called to be together for some purpose.”²³

When these two definitions are merged into a single definition or meaning, it would suggest that the church has been called out or called together to fellowship, commune, share, contribute, and participate with persons who live within the community where it is planted. Based on this understanding, the church is not planted in a specific community to become an island unto itself, rather the church is planted into the community to be a wellspring of theological and biblical resources that assist other agencies, and interest groups meet the relevant need of that community.

According to Guin, N. T. Wright says, “We have been so soaked in the individualism of modern Western culture that we feel threatened by the idea of our primary identity being that of the family we belong to—especially when the family in question is so large, stretching across space and time. The church isn’t simply a collection of isolated individuals, all following their own pathways of spiritual growth without much reference to one another.”²⁴ The comment by Wright gives one reason to pause and take stock of the real reason the church exist. How often have we witnessed the church existing for a select few, being labeled as an exclusive country club, or as way stations for people going to and fro?

Since one of the church’s purposes is to advance the kingdom of God by making disciples of all people, it is incumbent upon the church that members of each individual

²³ Jim Guin, “The New Perspective: A Theology of Community,” *One In Jesus*, accessed February 3, 2017, <http://oneinjesus.info/2007/11/the-new-perspective-the-theology-of-community/>.

²⁴ Guin, “The New Perspective.”

congregation resist the temptation toward isolation by seeking to find meaning in doing something to assist the community in remaining vital and sustainable.

Guin contributes isolationism of the church to its philosophy of being individualistic in its approach to having a relationship with Jesus Christ. While this may not be intentional, the results are still the same. Guin says, “We like to speak of our Christianity in radically individualistic terms. We have ‘a personal relationship’ with Jesus. ‘Spiritual disciplines’ are all about private Bible study, meditation, and prayer. I would just love to hear a sermon some day about the “discipline” of regularly being together with brothers and sisters!”²⁵ Imagine the ethos and mood of the church when pastors and leaders compel members toward the discipline of holy conferencing and holy gatherings. When the members of the church become actively involved in the lives of the people around the church, something exciting will take place in the life of the church and community. Much like, the energy that is experienced at a local sporting event or when people gather at their favorite watering hole to celebrate a birthday, anniversary or some other festive time in someone’s life. The lowest common denominator is the people, and when people get together having all things in common, a sense of *ekklesia* or *koinonia* takes place.

According to the early Christians, the church doesn’t exist in order to provide a place where people can pursue their private spiritual agendas and develop their own spiritual potential. Nor does it exist in order to provide a safe haven in which people can hide from the wicked world and ensure that they themselves arrive safely at an otherworldly destination. Private spiritual growth and ultimate salvation come rather as the by-products of the main, central, overarching purpose for which God has called and is calling us. This purpose is clearly stated in various places in the New Testament: that through the church God will announce to the wider world that he is indeed its wise, loving, and just creator; that through Jesus he has defeated the powers that corrupt and enslave it; and that by his Spirit he is at work to heal and renew it. It is as impossible, unnecessary, and

²⁵ Guin, “The New Perspective.”

undesirable to be a Christian all by yourself as it is to be a newborn baby all by yourself. The church is first and foremost a community, a collection of people who belong to one another because they belong to God, the God we know in and through Jesus.²⁶

Church and Community

“Perhaps nothing calls to mind more stereotypes than mention of intentional religious communities. Many in mainline denominations picture some sort of free-love Utopian communes filled with flower children from the sixties. Others imagine charismatic but manipulative leaders brainwashing a cult of disciples. The stereotypes typically say more about those of us who hold them, or at least about how we think of ourselves, namely, more responsible and realistic than idealist communes and more discerning and independent than obedient cults.”²⁷

In a study by Jason A. Mahn and Grace Koleczek entitled, “What Intentional Christian Communities Can Teach the Church, they seek to share the challenges and opportunities of thriving intentional Christian communities can teach the church. This study is based on the overarching stereotypes that exist, which describe the way others see the church and the way the church sees itself. In the study conducted in 2013 of five intentional Christian Churches, five distinct lessons were learned that could help other churches become more intentional if implemented. This study is particularly important to this project in that it provides proven results for churches that have been intentional about doing the work of the church rather than doing church work. In the context for this

²⁶ Guin, “The New Perspective.”

²⁷ Jason A. Mahn and Grace Koleczek, 2014, “What intentional Christian communities can teach the church,” *Word & World* 34, no. 2: 178-187, accessed February 23, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

project, the church on the surface is vital and sustainable, however, underneath it has lost its way when it comes to meeting the relevant needs of the people who live just outside its doors.

The five lessons learned from Mahn and Koleczek are:

1. Balancing Freedom and Authority
2. Effectiveness Holiness
3. Peaceable People
4. Stabilitas
5. For and Against (And Beside) The Institutional Church²⁸

Salient points from each of the above lessons learned will be shared in the subsequent paragraphs.

Balancing freedom and authority assumes that people in the center have the proper balance of individual rights and social commitments. In reality, many of the communities studied tend toward egalitarianism *and* communitarianism, valuing diverging and dissenting opinions while still emphasizing the call to bend toward the good of the whole. In order to answer the question as to if freedom from the authority of another does not hit too squarely with individualism and cultural liberalism, we must think of true authority and individual freedoms as a zero-sum game. “Leveling out the playing field [in decision making] *necessitates* community—it does not do away with it—because all of a sudden there is no one person making the decisions [and so] everyone

²⁸ Mahn and Koleczek, "What intentional Christian communities can teach the church," 179-185.

has to make decisions.” Individual freedom and commitment to the community here seem one and the same.²⁹

Effective holiness involves the idea that members essentially withdraw from the messy realities of civic duties and political necessities (and institutional churches) in the effort to build idealist, righteous subgroups. According to the research, many of the members interviewed were more concerned with staying faithful to their collective calling than with focusing on results, especially when bringing them about would compromise their sense of fidelity. For these people, the church is not about succeeding or even staying alive, rather the point of the church is to bear faithful witness. Also, for these people, success does not mean the Lord is on your side and failure does not mean the Lord is against you.³⁰

Peaceable people can dismiss intentional Christian communities especially those considered pacifist, by taking them as comprised of naturally peace-loving, harmonious individuals whose dispositions are enviable but not permitting of emulation by more conflicted types. Actually, the communities showcase tremendous realism about hostility, conflict, and “nonviolence” by actively practicing peacemaking regularly. Such practices thereby form more peaceable dispositions, rather than the other way around. In small and larger ways, the community understands itself to be “finding connection through violence” and even “living into conflict.” The peace thereby forged is quite different than a natural absence of conflict.³¹

²⁹ Mahn and Koleczek, "What intentional Christian communities can teach the church," 179, 181.

³⁰ Mahn and Koleczek, "What intentional Christian communities can teach the church," 181.

³¹ Mahn and Koleczek, "What intentional Christian communities can teach the church," 183.

Stabilitas is characterized by relegating it to a passing phase—historically to the latest “church renewal” movement, and developmentally to that which young people do before they get married and find real jobs. In short, many assume that Christian communities come and go at a rapid rate, while individuals join and vacate them even more quickly. Next to them, institutional churches appear tried and true. Therefore, church stability is a desired feature of the intentional Christian community. While such stability is initially established through the vows members make upon joining, it would seem that the ties that truly bind form through the intentional work and prayer that happens after the initiation; members do not simply perpetually stick to their vows but become engrafted into a body that they eventually can not do without.³²

For and against (and beside) the institutional church suggests that the intentional Christian community should be considered “prochurch” and not simply “parachurch.” Parachurch groups, who are filled with special-interest individuals are good at getting things done (responding to disasters, ministering to prisoners, etc.), but have the particular liability of leaving less for the church itself to do. It is also noted among the intentional Christian community that it is the church catholic, not fringe movements, that makes visible the wisdom of God to the powers of this world. As prochurch, more of the work of ministry becomes the responsibility of the church community making it an intentional body of believers who build the kingdom of God by serving the needs of others in addition to populating the gospel throughout the community. Parachurches according to the intentional Christian community are nothing more than special interest groups within the church who only rise to the level of service when their special interest

³² Mahn and Koleczek, “What intentional Christian communities can teach the church,” 185.

“bell” is rung. Otherwise, these groups are loosely affiliated to the ongoing life of the community called church.³³

Mahn and Koleczek close the analysis of the results of their research by noting how the five lessons learned might relate to and redefine central characteristics, if not theological marks, of many Christian communities. First, they offer a new perspective on the priesthood of all believers—one that goes beyond critiquing church hierarchy in their efforts to become discerning mediators (priests) in one another’s lives. Second, as these communities re-envision what effective holiness entails, their lives witness to church as *ek-klesia*, as called out from the world, including their idea of what it means to be effective. Third, the communities’ reconciling practices critique placing individual rights and non-interference before the challenge of working through conflict in order to become the body of Christ in more than name. Fourth, the communities’ desire for stability rediscovers the importance of formation over time, especially against easy Protestant caricatures of works righteousness and monastic withdrawal. Finally, because of their complex relationships to the wider church, these communities show that prophet and priest go hand in hand—that one cannot be faithful to a tradition without loving it enough to call it into question.³⁴

It is perfectly reasonable to claim the history and heritage of the African American experience in church and community. It is reasonable for African Americans to gain knowledge of their cultural roots and develop a theology that speaks to their individual and collective experience as oppressed people living in the United States in this the 21st century. It is reasonable for African Americans to be concerned about the

³³ Mahn and Koleczek, “What intentional Christian communities can teach the church,” 185.

³⁴ Mahn and Koleczek, “What intentional Christian communities can teach the church,” 187.

neighborhood they live in and the treatment of its citizens. It is also reasonable for African Americans to have pride in their churches and to expect them to be beacons of hope and a light for all the community to see.

However, problems arise when the people of the community neglect its heritage, history, and cultural roots and take on an individualistic posture when it comes to being good Samaritans and caring neighbors. The African American church and community does itself significant disservice when it reaps the harvest of limited resources and fails to deposit anything back to sustain and extend its life.

This has long been the prevailing culture of the African American community and this trend must be reversed if the African American community and church can make a transformative impact on the lives of the people within its gates. Black and Black liberation theology suggest that God is a God of the oppressed and that sacred scripture is replete with passages that speak to God's love and care for the have not's and the underdogs of society. In fact, scripture shows God's power over nations in his defeat of Aram/Syria, Babylon and other nations for the sake of the Israelites in addition to how God cares for individuals in the story of Hagar, Hannah, the widow woman in the story of Elijah, and many other stories of love and compassion in both the Old and New Testament. This is evident that Black and Black liberation theology is highly relational and that Black people in particular should take great comfort in knowing that despite their current circumstances, the sovereignty of God will provide for their care in due season.

The African American church has a great responsibility to be agents of God by producing prophets and priests who work tirelessly to equip its members to be mindful that because God does not neglect the have not's, that the church should not neglect the

have not's within its circumference of influence. This is reflective in the intentional Christian communities focus of balancing freedom and authority, effective holiness, peaceable people, *stabilitas* and being for and against (and beside) the institutional church.

Who Is My Neighbor: Church In A Changing Community

One of the most common questions about practices of Christian witness with their neighbors is, "Who is my neighbor?" The ambiguity of the question today reflects shifts in patterns of belonging and connection in American society.³⁵ One of the reasons there seems to be a separation between the church and the community generally and the African American community specifically is due to the rapid changes of community life and the racial and socio-economic makeup of many communities today.

The cultural and religious difference at the heart of Jesus's teaching according to Luke 10:29 is crucial to keep in mind amidst a wider fracturing of American society and culture unfolding today. Changes to the built environment and the rise of social media have both concentrated and created certain kinds of connections even as they have displaced and disconnected Americans from each other in various ways. This is a moment in which the church has an opportunity to re-envision and reclaim its identity and calling as a community of reconciliation amidst the unraveling of established structures and practices of belonging in American life.³⁶

³⁵ Dwight J. Zscheile, 2017, "Who is my neighbor?: the church's vocation in an era of shifting community," *Word & World* 37, no. 1: 27-36, accessed February 24, 2017, *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost.

³⁶ Zscheile, "Who is my neighbor?", 28.

Zscheile posits that a few generations ago, neighborhoods and communities were clustered together based on common interest such as housing, schools, voluntary organizations, clubs, and congregations, even as racism and other forms of discrimination excluded some Americans from full participation. Zscheile says that because of technology, social media, and the like, people are more inclined to self-select the communities they relate to. He says this selection process is called the Big Sort into sociologically homogeneous enclaves. Based on the Big Sort, people are no finding stability in a single community, which has consequential effects on the community in which they live.³⁷

According to Zschelie, this behavior has caused erosion in the stability of the middle class and allows people to self-select where they get information and how they assimilate into communities that feed their personal proclivities called micro-tribalism. This contributes to a deeply polarized political environment in which what was once a robust center has shifted toward the extremes. He goes on to say, “Conservatives prefer to live in communities with more space between homes, for instance, while liberals like to cluster tightly together in walkable urban settings. Many American communities now reflect distinct sub- cultures that are disconnected from each other—not only red and blue states, but regions, towns, and neighborhoods whose residents conform to shared political, cultural, and ideological assumptions.”³⁸ In the community that encompasses the projects context, this behavior has a direct effect on how people relate to and value the place where they live. The more micro-tribalism that exist within a nuclear community the

³⁷ Zscheile, "Who is my neighbor?", 28.

³⁸ Zscheile, "Who is my neighbor?", 28-29.

greater the probability that where people live becomes less important to where they associate and find value in their self-selected community.

Mark Dunkelman describes this shift in both the built environment and the culture of America as the vanishing neighbor. The vanishing neighbor concept posits that Americans spend more time with their families and the preferred outlets of their choosing at the expense of the people who live next door, down the block, or around the corner. Dunkelman goes on to say that expectations for neighborliness is clearly expressed by not investing in local neighbors and allowing persons who have nothing in common to keep to themselves even though they live in close proximity to one another. People can now largely avoid relationships with those of differing views.³⁹

One of the dilemmas of the twenty-first century is that shared, transcendent cultural frameworks for meaning in American society have eroded, and nothing has arisen to replace them. Underneath this is a deeper shift in late modernity toward the individual self being the ultimate source of authority. Said differently, in the twenty-first century, individuals get to determine what community is and what community looks like. Today society is working hard to deliver people from the vicissitudes of local communities and moving them to the global marketplace. This is most evident with the Internet and the massive selection people have for shopping, gathering in chat room, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and other social media outlets.⁴⁰

Zscheile says, “The church version of this trend has been articulated in recent years by a variety of voices calling for local engagement, such as the Parish Collective. Rather than having people drive miles across town to the Christian equivalent of a big-

³⁹ Zscheile, “Who is my neighbor?”, 29.

⁴⁰ Zscheile, “Who is my neighbor?”, 31.

box store (a mega-church) to consume programming that itself may have been generated on the other side of the country, these Christians are going local, envisioning the geographical neighborhood as the primary context for ministry, and emphasizing the formation of relationships with the people who live and work there. This involves simplifying church life, slowing down, and focusing on the common good of a particular place and its inhabitants in collaboration with community partners. The old Christendom concept of parish is being retrieved as a framework for missionary engagement within a geographical space.”⁴¹

Theologically, this turn toward the local is inspired by the incarnation—God’s indwelling of a particular cultural moment and context in Christ. Eugene Peterson’s rendering of John 1:14 captures it well: “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”⁴² The incarnation is about God joining humanity in the local and particular, sharing our place and our struggles, accompanying us where we are. The church as the body of Christ thrives when it, too, dwells deeply within its surrounding communities, joining neighbors there.⁴²

The question of who is my neighbor continues to be pertinent in communities throughout America. Regardless of how community is defined, either self-selected, local, global, micro-tribal or intentional Christian communities, the church has a responsibility to meet the needs of the people that God has placed in its mission field. The research in this theological section demonstrates that the issues of disconnecting and decaying communities are not unique to the African American community. The question for the

⁴¹ Zscheile, “Who is my neighbor?”, 31-32.

⁴² Zscheile, “Who is my neighbor?”, 32.

church is how do we connect with people, regardless of where they are and provide the love, hope, and care that God demands of His church. It is incumbent on the church to open its eyes and its doors to those in need and provide assistance as the gifting and resources are available.

The theological mandate of the church is succinctly outlined in the Great Commission and that is to go and make disciples. This mandate is grounded in the notion that everyone is our neighbor and everyone should have the opportunity to receive the life saving and transforming power of Jesus Christ. The church is the only institution and organism given by God for this to happen. If we neglect the people outside our doors and within our reach, we will be found guilty of disobedience to the word of God and ultimately suffer the consequences of a less than desirable way of life as the church and as the community in which the church is planted.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Thus far, we have looked at the biblical, historical, and theological foundations that relate to the church and her responsibility for connecting with the community in which it is planted to provide hope and resources while meeting basic needs. In this section, theoretical foundations, we will endeavor to look at who has worked on this issue in the past, who is working on it now and what can be used as a viable path forward for the context to reconnect with the community outside its doors.

Based on the prior foundations, it is clear that problems of church and community have been going on for thousands of years. It is also clear that as we press our way into this the twenty-first century, the issues are becoming more complicated with the dawn of technology, social media and the ability for people to establish community across the globe at the press of a button. Community is no longer defined based on a finite geographic location; rather the making of community is as vast as there are ways to communicate. People no longer are confined to location as the determinant for being in community, which has caused previous notions of community to have great challenge; especially for the church.

Mega-churches, commuter churches, digital churches, virtual churches, video streaming, and web-based church have made a tremendous shift in the way people experience the presence of God in community. No longer are people confined to churches

within walking distance from their home; today, people are able to self-select the method, time and location of where they choose to fellowship and be integrated into a community of faith. This poses a significant problem for local churches that once depended upon its members to engage in ministry with one another and those within a three-mile radius around its facility. Interestingly enough, it would seem that the people who live in the three-mile radius of the church would not be affected by the shifting culture of church life. However, the problem is greater than any one church would be willing to publically admit. Since more and more people are self-selecting their church of choice, many of which are commuter members, they seem to neglect the needs of the people in the community since they have no vested interest in the community other than attending church.

In this section, we are going to examine various models of ministry that assist the church in not only being a neighbor of all within its sphere of influence, but to encourage active participation in the ongoing life of the community through viable ministries that meet the relevant needs of the people. We will look at community organizing models, discipleship models, outreach models, evangelism models, and mission models as a bridge for establishing a contextual model that can be replicated in other ministry settings.

Community Organizing

The basic premise behind community organizing is based on a community of people you like around you whom you like but may not like equally. The people are there when you need them and when they need you. Community organizations come in many shapes, sizes and varieties, however they have at least two things in common:

1. They strive to develop as sense of community among their members
2. They organize people to do what they cannot do themselves

In a world where problems and power or the lack thereof exist, community organizations are a method of getting things done and solving problems that affect you. They have the ability to realign the balance of power by bringing people together and giving the power to the people by grouping people with like concerns. In this sense, the church can be viewed as a community organization.¹

To be effective in community organizing requires people to be aware of the own self-interest while building relationships with others and the desire to change the community or the world. It takes “understanding how groups work, why people join them, how to pay for the, how to set dues, goals, and rules, how to develop values, and how to move people to action. Successful groups need solid internal management , good group process, secure funding, effective communication, and a sense of trust and community among their members.”²

According to Brown, Americans have held to two beliefs about individualism and community. On the one hand, Americans believe in, and glorify the self-made man and on the other hand, relish a sense of community where people are neighbors who help each other out. Institutions or the state of federal government cannot solve many of the problems found in community. It is in these cases where communities of people are galvanized around common interest to make sure the problems they face can be solved.³

¹ Michael Jacoby Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations* (Arlington, MA: Long Haut Press, 2006), 1.

² Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations*, 3-4.

³ Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations*, 6.

In order to solve problems and improve the problems people face requires the active participation of the people most affected by the problem(s). Alfred J. Marrow summarizes this notion best by saying,

A man who joins a group is significantly changed thereby. His relations with his fellow members alter both him and them. A highly attractive group can bring great pressure to bear upon its members; a weak group will not have as much molding power. The whole is different from the sum of its parts; it has definite properties of its own.⁴

Whether the organization is a congregation, a neighborhood civic association, a community group, etc., many of the group dynamics required to build a strong organization are the same. All organizations require strong group development to be purposeful and successful. Organizations are always looking for ways to build community, ways for people to know each other better and ways for people to come into face-to-face contact with each other. When people are placed together who share a common interest, even if it is just four or five, they can come up with an action plan to improve their situation.⁵

The following are the steps that Brown recommends to build a successful community organization.

1. Start with an idea
2. Develop the vision
3. Start with yourself; what makes you tick
4. Listen to others
5. Put your organization in writing

⁴ Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations*, 8.

⁵ Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations*, 15.

6. Develop a sponsoring committee
7. Bring the core group together
8. Take action and execute the vision plan⁶

When these eight steps have been executed with precision and passion, the result over time will be a well-intentioned and powerful organization able to act on issues that are of significant importance to those who make up the group.

Unlike Brown's approach to community organizing, Si Kahn's approach is different in that he uses what he calls the creative approach to organizing. With this approach, Kahn moves beyond the traditional approach to organizing to strategically get things done, especially when seeming insurmountable obstacles stand in the way such as legal and political systems. According to Kahn in his book, *Creative Community Organizing: A Guide for Rabble Rousers, Activists, & Quiet Lovers of Justice*, there are twenty steps to taking action toward solving the problems of community involvement.

These twenty steps are paraphrased and summarized below:

1. Most people are motivated primarily by self-interest. This becomes the glue that binds the people together toward a common purpose.
2. Institutions and people who hold power over others rarely are as united as they appear on the surface. The goal is to get these institutions and people to stay out of the fight.
3. Begin the process by imagining the step just before victory and work backward to develop steps to get there.
4. Take a positive stand or position and then oppose the negative position
5. The greater the task, the more difficult it will be to accomplish. In this case as the participants to do one thing and one thing only.
6. Regardless how divided people may be, if the cause is right they will always find a way to rally around it. Therefore, leave the stereotypes at the door.

⁶ Brown, *Building Powerful Community Organizations*, 16.

7. People are always partly united and partly divided. Your goal is to rally the people around the unifying causes as you work with them.
8. Demonstrations are still effective. You must find less confrontational ways of being seen and heard.
9. Make sure that all participants are clearly aware of the risk and losses they may suffer both individually and collectively before acting.
10. Work hard at asking questions that will cause participants to think deeply about the answers.
11. Be cheerful in the face of adversity and help others feel that way.
12. The more you are sure of yourself in a particular situation the more you must work to avoid imposing your personal feelings on others.
13. Hold institutions to its goals and responsibility. At worst form another organization to force the original institution to do its job or to replace it.
14. When people who have not had power get it, there is no guarantee that they will exercise it any better than those who had it before.
15. There is no guarantee that people will be able to see beyond their own situation. Work on being transformational for the cause of the mission rather than being instrumental.
16. The thought that organizers are violent people is not true. It is a tactic to discredit the organization from being victorious.
17. You should not only go with what you know but with who you know. Relationships are critical. Make sure you give people options for how they can serve and get involved.
18. It's easy to shift for representing a community as its spokes person to being its leader even when you don't live in the community.
19. It is never certain what people can accomplish together, therefore, never compromise with injustice.
20. The beloved community is not just a futuristic goal; it is something that can be experienced every day while working toward the ultimate goal. Celebrate the small victories along the way.⁷

⁷ Si Kahn, *Creative Community Organizing: A Guide for Rabble Rousers, Activists, & Quiet Lovers of Justice* (San Francisco, CA: Bennett-Kochler Publishers, Inc. 2010), 193-196.

By following the top twenty creative organizing steps, organizations will have a greater opportunity for moving the barriers that plague the people and give them the power to act in ways that transform their personal and communal concerns. The more successful organizational actions become, the greater ability the organization has in gaining more members and creating more power to act in the face of opposition.

Discipleship Models

We have previously stated that churches can be considered community organizations based on the generally held definition of community organizing. However, as the church, more times than not, groups are usually organized around religious and spiritual matters rather than matters that are important to the community around it. Church members have common interest by virtue of being a part of the ecclesia, however, they rarely come together to deal with issues beyond themselves. For this reason, discipleship models may be a better fit for the church to engage the community in meeting its relevant needs and reducing their problems.

The primary focus of discipleship and disciple making is found in the Great Commission according to Matthew 28:16-20 that says,

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Johnson and Crawley posits that the only way to make disciples according to the great commission is to do it the way that Jesus did it. The way that Jesus made disciples

was based on some formal teaching in addition to some informal instruction by creating opportunities for them to learn by seeing and doing. Jesus taught in the synagogues and well as through demonstration when he washed his disciples feet. While Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he also prayed in their presence. The overall approach to disciple making by Jesus was through active experiential learning rather than by verbal instruction.⁸

Johnson and Crawley believe the best way to teach discipleship is following Jesus in teaching spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, and fasting in addition to experiential learning. It is important to teach members how to study the Bible and then studying the Bible with them. It is important to teach the principles of worship but also joining them in creating and doing worship. Each directive in the Great Commission was taught and demonstrated by Jesus while he walked with his disciples.⁹

Making disciples is not something that is automatic; it takes effort and it is intentional. It is an active concept and not passive. The process is complete and full. The goal of disciple making is to get people saved. This does not mean to reduce the work of evangelism, as evangelism is a part of the process. Jesus says in Mark 16, to preach the gospel everywhere you go.¹⁰

The process of making disciples is not a means to an end; it does not end when someone gets baptized or becomes saved. It is a lifelong process; the disciples were with Jesus throughout his entire ministry. The entire time they were with Jesus, they were

⁸ Ronnie Johnson, Steve Crawley, *Following the Model of Christ by Making Disciples* (Conway, AZ, DiscipleGuide Church Resources, 2012), Kindle.

⁹ Johnson, Crawley, *Following the Model of Christ*.

¹⁰ Johnson, Crawley, *Following the Model of Christ*.

being taught and disciplined. Therefore, the disciple making process is life long as exemplified by the Great Commission. Jesus said, he would be with the disciples to the end of the age. This means that the process is continuous for the one being disciplined and also for the one doing the discipling. This is the only way to fulfill the Great Commission.¹¹

According to the great commission, the process of making disciples is going, baptizing, and teaching. Going means to leave your comfort zone and find those who are not saved. Once you have found the unsaved, they are to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Finally, those who have been baptized must be taught the commands of Jesus and they must be compelled to obey them until they die. Significant in teaching is to position those who have been taught to go, baptize, and teach. The process is ongoing and never ending. However, we seen to stop at the teaching portion, without sending those who have been taught to repeat the same process in their own lives.

Earley and Dempsey say,

- Disciple making is a process of what we call discipleship and evangelism
- Disciple making is the directive of the Great Commission
- Disciple making is possible based on the Great Commandment
- Disciple making is not possible if you are not a follower of Jesus Christ
- Disciple making is not possible if you are not obedient to the word of God
- Disciple making is about the person (disciple) and the process (making new disciples)¹²

¹¹ Johnson, Crawley, *Following the Model of Christ*.

¹² Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is... How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2013), Kindle.

In order to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, we must first learn to trust in God. Once we learn to trust, our next steps are: Declaration, Development, and Deployment.

1. Declaration leads to regeneration = being saved or being a committed believer
2. Development leads to transformation = being trained or being a devoted follower
3. Deployment leads to reproduction or multiplication = being sent or becoming a multiplying leader

In order to make a declaration unto salvation, you must be willing to immerse yourself into Jesus, His Word, and the community you are being sent. Then we must be willing to follow Jesus. In order to follow Jesus, we must be willing to go to the cross or die to our old selves and be reborn into a life of Christ.¹³

According to Earley and Dempsey embracing the cross means:

1. Being able to rely on Jesus and Jesus alone. This mean leaving a ministry of convenience and adopting a ministry and life of sacrifice. Without sacrifice, we ultimately create a ministry that is based on our personal schedules and timelines, which is nothing more than a ministry of convenience, which will never be effective in making disciples and living out the Great Commission.

Often this will mean divorcing oneself from vocation, possessions, friendships, and the creature comforts that defined our existence. This step requires a great measure of sacrifice and spiritual maturity. Without this step, meeting the requirements of the Great Commission is next to impossible.

2. It means giving Jesus complete control of our lives and allow him to direct our path and direction in life.
3. Embracing the cross means choosing the path of God when His path and our path cross. Too often we are called to make difficult decisions concerning the work of the Lord and too often, the work of the Lord takes a back seat to our personal desires and wants.

¹³ Earley and Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*.

4. It means developing a sacrificial relationship with Jesus that will enable you to do the work of ministry knowing that Jesus said that greater things we would do in his name. And while this may often lead to uncomfortable situations and circumstances, the work of ministry in the name of Jesus is well worth the sacrifice.
5. It means being a witness for Jesus Christ on earth, sharing the Good News and modeling a life that will compel other to want to follow.¹⁴

When we confess Christ as our personal savior and are willing to embrace the cross for his sake, we will actualize our declaration and be on the road to becoming a disciple. Once we have made our declaration of faith unto salvation we must next be developed in Jesus Christ as disciples.

One sure way to be developed in Jesus Christ is by passionately pursuing him with you whole heart. It means walking as he walked and doing as he did. This is the path that leads to successful disciple making. Remember, Jesus asked Peter if he loved him three times. In doing so he was commissioning Peter to feed his sheep or go and make disciples. The parable of the Rich Young Ruler is an example of the sacrifice necessary to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. It is only when we are able to forsake all other and follow Jesus that we are truly able to be one of his disciples.

Jesus is clear, following him does not mean following the Jesus of our own making, rather it means following the Jesus who gave his life that we may have life and life more abundantly. For this reason, it is necessary for those who wish to be disciples of Jesus to embrace their declaration of salvation and work daily at maturing spiritually to the point that we are willing to go beyond our comfort zones in order to be pleasing in his sight.

¹⁴ Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*.

What many in the church today consider as discipleship is not what Jesus had in mind. Rather than trying to grow large crowds and build large building, Jesus was more concerned with people who are willing to go into the mission field where they are planted and make new disciples on a regular basis.

As a disciple of Jesus Christ, He must become Lord over our lives. This means that we must make tough decisions regarding the single command that he made prior to his ascension, and that is to make disciples. Often we become distracted in doing church work that we forget to do the work of the church; and that is to make disciples of Jesus Christ until his coming again. When we think about it, very few ministries of the church compel members to make disciples. However, if the church is to grow and if the Kingdom of God is to be advanced in this the 21st century, we must put making disciples as the most important ministry we undertake as Christians and disciples of Jesus Christ. Once we have matured spiritually and developed as disciples, we are ready to be deployed.¹⁵

If we are honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that there are more people in the church who have joined, gone through membership classes, membership assimilation, joined a ministry and serve the church with their whole heart, yet many of these same people have never led a person to faith in Jesus Christ. This is the essence of disciple making. Unless we led someone to faith in Jesus Christ, we may consider ourselves disciples but we have not become disciple makers, which is what Jesus commanded us to do. Discipleship that leads to disciple making always results in the

¹⁵ Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*.

transformation of new converts to the faith and the multiplication or reproduction of new Christians.¹⁶

The hard truth about discipleship is this: No fruit, no discipleship. True disciples are those who bear fruit by making disciples. In order to bear fruit and make disciples is to maintain a deep and abiding relationship with Jesus. When we produce the fruit of disciple making, we are glorifying God as proof that we are his disciples. The whole point of being a disciple of Jesus Christ is to make disciples. John 15:16 say, “I appointed you that you should go out and produce fruit and that your fruit should remain.”¹⁷

Earley and Dempsey are clear, the difference between effective and ineffective disciple making is the issue of what you are training people to be and what you are equipping them to do. Disciples are made to be something (fruit bearers) and do something (bear fruit). Earley and Dempsey, say, if you are not bearing fruit, you are not a disciple. Bearing fruit as defined by Earley and Dempsey is determined by having a Christ-like love for others, possess the fruit of the spirit, use your spiritual gifts to the glory of God and finally by using your fruit to make new disciples.¹⁸

While there may be strong disagreement to the position that Earley and Dempsey take toward defining discipleship and disciple making, we can all agree that as the church, there is much more that we can do in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

¹⁶ Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*.

¹⁷ Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*.

¹⁸ Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is*.

Outreach and Evangelism

In *Growing Your Church Through Evangelism and Outreach* by Marshall Shelley, Shelley quotes Doug Murren and Mike Meeks in saying, “Getting a big crowd to a special event is one thing, getting them to church is another.”¹⁹ This preconversation phase of attracting visitors to church make take up to one year in duration. Today, visitors need a safe and often long preconversation stage before they build enough confidence in the church to consider becoming members. Unchurched people distrust the church and therefore, they need to come and just watch for a while.²⁰

In order to get visitors and the unchurched to come inside the building is hard work. Unlike ministry events such as musicals, jazz concerts, and community youth activities where people will come without much incentive, these same people take a long time to join a church. Research shows that most church will fail at attracting new members if they only seek to hook them through events and special programs. The effective glue for getting new members is relationships. Research shows that of the ten people who join a church, nine of them join at the invitation of a friend. Significant dollars are spent on advertising, while very little effort is mustered in teaching and encouraging members to bring their friends.²¹

Shelley says that the most effective ways to get new members is by

- Focusing on bringers and includes
- Creating a safe place

¹⁹ Marshall Shelley, *Growing Your Church Through Evangelism and Outreach* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 5.

²⁰ Shelley, *Growing Your Church Through Evangelism*, 6.

²¹ Shelley, *Growing Your Church Through Evangelism*, 7.

- Explaining what you mean
- Explaining why you mean it
- Do not rush people
- Do not be surprised by their problems
- Give nonthreatening invitations²²

While the goal of outreach and evangelism is to grow the church, it is also an opportunity to develop relationships with people who are not members but live in the community surrounding the church. The notion of inviting friends and building relationships is an excellent way to move the church from the building into the community by intentionally making friendships with people who in the neighborhood live in the neighborhood surrounding the church.

Yes, it is easier to attract those you know, however, if we are to reach people for the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must also become interested in the people who live in the neighborhood surrounding the church. This is where an effective outreach program can help. Outreach by definition is to reach out to those persons beyond the congregation and invite them to a life saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Getting to know people and working to meet their needs is an important part of evangelism, outreach, and disciple making. When we reach out beyond ourselves, we are being disciples of Jesus Christ and we are fulfilling the commands of the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

²² Shelley, *Growing Your Church Through Evangelism*, 6-10.

We now move from evangelism and getting new members to getting them to serve through viable outreach programs. Before a congregation can successfully engage in community outreach the following questions must be answered:

1. What is our congregation's current view of outreach ministry?
2. What is our current ministry programming?
3. How are we preparing people for externally focused ministry?
4. What are the needs of our city?
5. Who can we partner with?
6. How can we get everyone involved?²³

The word outreach can have a variety of definitions. Outreach can range from reaching out with compassion to those in need, works of service to support efforts around the world, to evangelism. The underlying point to outreach is meeting beyond one's self, community or institution. From Petty's perspective, outreach may take one of three forms; the fortress approach, the forced approach, and the fragrance approach.²⁴

The fortress approach requires people to barricade themselves away from the world with the notion that they need to separate themselves from evil and become pure. With this approach, people are compelled to make significant cultural shifts in order to be saved by coming to the fortress or church. The forced approach suggests that the church does not have to remove itself from community but show up in large numbers to speak out against an injustice that may be affecting. With this approach, members must be careful not to lose sight of the gospel while they stand for justice issues. The fragrance

²³ Krista Petty, "Connecting Your Church to Your Community," Externally Focused Network, accessed February 13, 2017, http://www.faithformation2020.net/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/five_steps_to_an_externally_focused_church.pdf, 5.

²⁴ Petty, "Connecting Your Church to Your Community," 6.

approach suggests that the people of the church are unleashed into the community to assist in meetings needs being careful not to be forceful or suggest that the only way to salvation is through their church.²⁵

Petty says, “Notice how the Kingdom of God advances. It’s not obvious initially but it penetrates and impacts. This is how the gospel moves forward, not by force but by penetrating our society with the same tools Jesus used in his ministry on earth: grace and truth.”²⁶

Different from Petty, Shelley says that in order for outreach to be effective, you must invite volunteers to serve, identify what they are doing as important, look out for their needs, recognize them often, and debrief at the end of the outreach activity. Critical to the debriefing is to learn from the outreach experience by asking the following questions:

- What surprised you today?
- Who were you able to interact with?
- Did you feel God was reminding you of anything?
- What worked well?
- What will you never forget?
- What can we do better next time?

Not only do you talk about the positives but also talk about things that can improve communicating value and importance to the volunteers. A volunteer knows that their mind and heart matter, not just their hands for labor. A volunteer understands that this effort is a group effort and that it is a partnership. If improvements can be made it

²⁵ Petty, “Connecting Your Church to Your Community,” 6.

²⁶ Petty, “Connecting Your Church to Your Community,” 6.

will only enhance the partnership and relationship between the organization and the volunteers long term. This feedback allows for change and change is always the goal of learning.²⁷

²⁷ Shelley, *Growing Your Church Through Evangelism*, 10.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

There has been significant writing on the notion of the invisible church in America. Suffice it to say, the invisible church can best be expressed by saying that church structures and buildings are located within various communities and yet, they do little if anything to provide for the needs of the people of the community. It is as if the church has truly become a members only club. If the church ceases to be a beacon of hope, and a light to the nation, it also becomes invisible to those who live around her. When the church is unable or uninterested in meeting the needs of the people of the neighborhood or community where it is planted, it thus loses its value and meaning, not only to those around the church, but also to the members of the church as well. That being said, the hypothesis for his ministry project was that if the principles of community organizing, disciple making and outreach are taught, practiced and implemented within the life of the church, members would be compelled to establish meaningful relationships with those who live around the church as well as those who drive in. This ministry model could not be completed in its entirety within the time parameters of the doctor of ministry program. Therefore, while a comprehensive model was developed, the practicing and implementing stages will take place shortly after the completion of this project. The goal

of this project was to test the validity of the teaching arm of the comprehensive model itself.

Methodology

The model utilized preaching, teaching, equipping, and training leaders and members of St. Timothy. The preaching segment was a four-part sermon series based on the Great Commission and three parables of Jesus that speak to discipleship. The sermon series was designed to remind members of the responsibility of making disciples and convicting them in their responsibilities as disciples of Jesus Christ. This series should have members realize that the kingdom of God is greater than membership in the church.

The teaching segment was a four-part Bible study on the Great Commission and three additional parables of Jesus dealing with discipleship. The teaching series was designed to allow members to see the intentionality of Jesus' work on earth and how his mission was greater than a building or numbers on the church roll, rather his mission was to save souls. An open-ended questionnaire was provided to members of the Bible study at the beginning and retrieved at the end of each study. The questionnaires were collected and tabulated by the context associates.

The equipping segment of the project was based on the discovery of spiritual gifts. Each participant took a spiritual gifts inventory designed to reveal each persons unique gift for serving God's church. A pre and posttest was administered to the participants to determine their initial and summative understanding of the importance of spiritual gifts in the disciple making process. After the administering of the pre test, a brief summary of spiritual gifts and their importance to the discipleship process was explained in lecture

format allowing for questions and answers prior to taking the posttest. The context associates administered both the pre and posttest and tabulate the findings.

The training segment of the project was designed to provide critical skills in in-reach and outreach evangelism as part of the discipleship process. Participants were given instruction over a two-week training process and then given two weeks to recruit existing members of the congregation into the ministries they lead. The context associates tabulated the results of the implemented training process.

The professional associates were responsible for assisting in the analysis of all data methods, critiquing the process and making recommendations along the way to make the process stronger and reading the results of the final Doctor of Ministry project.

Based on the project design, a mixed method of data analysis was used to validate the overall findings that support the hypothesis and presuppositions for this project.

Below is the project calendar that guided the progress of the project from beginning to the end.

Project Calendar

1 ST Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sermon 1 – Great Commission • Administer sermon questionnaire • Bible study 1 – Great Commission • Administer Bible study questionnaire
2 nd Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sermon 2 – Great Commission • Administer sermon questionnaire • Bible study 2 – Great Commission • Administer Bible study questionnaire
3 rd Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sermon 3 – Great Commission • Administer sermon questionnaire • Bible study 3 – Great Commission • Administer Bible study questionnaire • Spiritual Gift Inventory • Administer Pre-Posttest

4 th Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sermon 4 – Great Commission • Administer sermon questionnaire • Bible study 4 – Great Commission • Administer Bible study questionnaire • In-reach/outreach training • Data tabulation sermon/Bible study
5 th Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-reach/outreach training • Data tabulation sermon/Bible study • Data tabulation pre-posttest
6 th Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of members to ministry • Begin summarizing all data
7 th Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of members to ministry • Begin summarizing all data
8 th Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete data summary and field work

Implementation

The implementation of the project follows the prescribed methodology outlined above.

Sermon Series

The four part sermon series was based on the great commission with an accompanying Bible study to reinforce what was preached. The text that was used for the sermon series was taken from Matthew 28: 18-20. The four sermons were, The Great Commission, Making Disciples, An Imperative not a Suggestion, and The Great Omission.

The sermon, The Great Commission was Jesus' final command to the disciples and those who gathered with Jesus prior to His ascension into heaven. According to the text, Jesus told the disciples to go, make, baptize, and teach. These four words were the most important directions that Jesus gave. However, the ideal of Jesus' command was the

words, “And I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.” These words transcended those who heard them, they were a perpetual command of what Jesus expected of all who would follow him until his final return to claim the church in final victory. Therefore, the Great Commission is for us on today. We too are to go, make, baptize, and teach. Once we accept the ultimate and final command of Jesus, we are to implement it in our lives for the rest of our lives.

The problems the church face with growth, outreach, and community collaboration stems from the church not being faithful to the command of Jesus. Too often, the church has relegated the final command of Jesus to a program that whosoever will, may choose to participate. The failure in doing this is lack of growth, insufficient outreach, and no involvement in the community that surrounds the church. Unless the church as a whole fully engage and embrace the Great Commission, we will never realize the fullness of God’s kingdom on earth.

The sermon on Making Disciples was an attempt to show the congregation that the responsibility of being disciples of Jesus Christ does not end in being saved, rather it begins with being saved, being developed in to disciples and then being deployed to make new disciples. Once church disciples are sent out, they are to continue this work into perpetuity. Making disciples is not a one-time event, rather it is a lifetime of sacrifice, and service in recognition of what the Lord has done in saving us. The sermon suggested that if we are only interested in being saved, we would diminish the opportunity of God’s kingdom on earth in the form of a greater quality of life for all who serve Him.

The sermon on An Imperative not a Suggestion sought to impress upon the congregation that disciple making is the most significant mark of a disciple of Jesus

Christ. We cannot say that we are disciples of Jesus if we are not making disciples. To not make disciples relegate us to being members of a religious society, which amounts to nothing more than another social gathering for people who want to feel good about themselves. In this wise, the quality of our lives are not improved as we continue to come to the building called church each week and wondering why we see no growth, miracles, and no signs of Jesus' presence in our midst.

The final sermon was The Great Omission. This was possibly the most difficult sermon of the series for the members to accept. In this sermon, members were reminded of the various ways we sin: thought, word, deed, omission, and commission. Then, they were enlightened on the fact that when we fail to be disciple makers and we fail to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus we commit the Great Omission and sin against God for our failure to be disciples and disciple makers.

After service, many members wanted to talk about their faith and if they were really Christian and if they were really saved. This was the ideal opportunity to restate the passage where Jesus said, "If you want to be one of my disciples, you must deny yourself, pick up a cross and follow me." I was able to share the difference between commitment to the church building and commitment to God. Since everything we do as disciples is to bring glory to God, I asked, where is the glory in not doing the one thing that Jesus asked us to do until the end of the age or until we die. This alone changed the perspective of how members began to see the work of the church rather than being busy doing church work. It was a time of repentance and restoration. Ultimately, I strongly believe that this one sermon will change the spiritual fortitude of the members of St. Timothy church.

Bible Studies

In this section, we chose to look at the biblical passages from Matthew 28:16-20 and 1 Corinthians 12:20-27. The first passage concerned the Great Commission and the second passage was on the meaning of being the body of Christ.

The Great Commission (Mt 28:16-20)

Question 1 – What is the purpose of the Great Commission today?

- GO, each one reach one
- Lead unbelievers to Christ
- Meet people where they are and lead them into a relationship with Christ
- Spread the gospel to those who do not know
- Go and teach the commandments to those who do not know them
- Leave the church building and go into the community and make disciples
- Reach an ever changing world with a never changing message

Based on the responses given, the participants indicated a healthy understanding of the meaning of the Great Commission. The responses also indicate willingness on the part of the participants to change the current ethos of the congregation and make valiant attempts at moving beyond the safety of the sanctuary and endeavoring into the community.

Question 2 – What is the significance of Go, Make, Baptize, Teach

- Leave your comfort zone and reach those in need
- Seek others, make a significant difference, teach the word of God
- Teach others so they can teach others

- Go and teach people how to be disciples of Jesus Christ
- Get out of our comfort zone
- Share the gospel, teach how to live and grow in Christ
- Obey what the word says
- Get up, pick up and walk
- We don't go, we don't make so we need to lead by example
- To be stressed in order to keep confusion to a minimum
- We hold the solution to a dying world if we would only implement it

The respondents indicated by their responses a limited understanding of the command of Jesus to go, make, baptize, and teach. It seems they concentrated more on the going but still need work in comprehending and understanding how to make disciples through the process of baptizing and teaching. Going seems to be a familiar task of the old system of evangelism, however, minimal success occurs when the congregation has limited knowledge of what to do once they have gone out. This is a significant revelation in the sense that it shows the vulnerability and lack of biblical comprehension on the part of the leadership of the church.

Question 3 – Is discipleship and evangelism to separate ministries or two sides of one.

- They are both necessary for the body of Christ
- Discipleship is to teach, evangelism is to lead
- They are two separate ministries
- Two separate ministries
- Two sides of one process
- Two separate ministries

- Side by side
- To make disciples we must learn what evangelism is
- The Great Commission makes it clear

A significant number of participants believe that evangelism and discipleship are two different ministries. With this understanding, it is almost impossible to teach the basis of the Great Commission as a responsibility of every disciple of Jesus Christ. This shows the depth of mis-education and the appropriation of antiquated methods and teachings that were perpetuated down through the years. On the other hand it provides a significant opportunity for the church to become realigned to the exegetical meaning of the Great Commission as we seek to become a congregation of disciple makers who are determined to experience the kingdom of God in the land of the living.

Question 4 – How important is it for all members of the church to see themselves as disciple makers. What is this important?

- It is important to expand the body of Christ
- It is important because others see your good works
- Important that others see you are a disciple of the Lord
- Important in developing a better community
- Important to minister to others so they can learn to minister to others
- It takes on to reach one
- Important – people will learn more from what they see
- Important to teach self then become able to teach others
- The more that are disciples, the more we can lead to God
- Important – we become the billboard for other to see and follow

- Important – people need to see in order to believe
- Important because it is the Great Commission

Most of the responses indicate that the participants believe that all members should be disciple makers. However, based on previous responses, work must be done in restructuring existing ideals and practices toward being faithful to the command of God to go and make disciples. Issues of faith, priority, and sacrifice must be strengthened before we are able to see much progress and success. This is a good start.

1 Corinthians 12: 20-27

Question 1 – What is your understanding of unity in the body of Christ

- It is needed for us to work together
- To save souls by getting people to know Jesus
- To tell of the goodness of Jesus
- One body many body, one suffers all suffer – all parts of the church are necessary
- We all play a vital part in the body of Christ – no one is bigger than the other
- What hurts one part hurts the whole body
- We are all equal
- We must do our part and encourage other to do the same
- Everybody is important
- We must come together
- Function differently but all must do their job well

The participants demonstrate knowledge of the meaning of unity in the body of Christ. Their responses indicate a sense of common fellowship and the necessity of

bearing each other burdens. However, there is much to learn about what Paul was referring to when he spoke of unity in the body of Christ. This is another opportunity for the church to mobilize around being on one accord when it comes to meeting the needs of the community and becoming collaborative partners with our neighbors.

Question 2 – How well does our church practice the principles of unity

- We work together
- To teach us to go out together
- Go out into the community to encourage people to come to church
- We need to elevate every ministry of the church
- Not as well as we should
- We could do much better
- We are doing better because of our new pastor
- Pretty good but we need much improvement
- It's a work in process
- As a new member, I didn't expect perfection but a place to grow and work
- We encourage ministries to work together
- Well taught in these practices
- We are still growing

This question brought mixed understandings from the respondents. There were those who felt the church does a good job in practicing unity, while on the other hand, there are those who believe that the church has not demonstrated a willingness to do so on a regular basis. The honesty demonstrated by the respondents showed the magnitude of their commitment to the church and each other, however, it does not go far enough in

extending the preferred level of unity as a congregation. There are some groups who work well together over the years and there are ministries who have never worked together. The ultimate determinant as to if the church understood this principle is based on how unified they become in the days and weeks after this project is over.

Question 3 – What does it mean when one suffer all suffer

- We are one body
- Must work together
- We must be accountable to everyone in the church
- The old members suffer together but the new members are on their own
- We all have something wrong with us
- We are a family
- We are concerned about each other
- We reach out to those who are hurting and suffer with them
- We show love with patience and understanding

Most of the participants had the wrong understanding of the word suffer. It seems based on their responses that to suffer means illness or unfortunate circumstance. The basis of the question and subsequent answer was about falling short of an obligation to do the will of God. When we become the body of Christ, our responsibility is to live in such a way that we minimize suffering so that the body can grow and prosper.

Question 4 – What can you do to ensure unity in the church

- Be an example and give them the spiritual gifts
- It is important to understand your purpose

- Ask those who are not serving how they can get involved
- Teach the importance of togetherness
- Teach and lead by example
- Ask God and seek humility and guidance
- Be a part of the solution and not the problem
- Listen and observe. Show you really care
- Be willing to let people know when they are counterproductive
- By observing
- Being on one accord

While the participants did not show great understanding with respect to suffering, they did show knowledge and willingness to establish unity across the church. While previous answers indicate the church has work to do when it comes to practicing the principles of unity, they are clear about their resolve to produce unity as a church.

Spiritual Gifts Assessment

This section measured the participant's knowledge and awareness of their spiritual gifts and how they are to be used in the church as a sign of being unified as the body of Christ. Below are the results of the pre and posttest results. The questions were to be answered base on the Likert Scale using the following indicators:

Very knowledgeable = VK Somewhat Knowledgeable = SK Knowledgeable = K

Little Knowledge = LK No Knowledge = NK

Pre Test

Questions	VK	SK	K	LK	NK
The purpose of the spiritual gift assessment	20%	10%	70%	0%	0%
Do you use spiritual gift in selecting leaders	0%	30%	0%	10%	60%
Are spiritual gifts used in membership orientations	0%	0%	20%	0%	80%
Do your ministry use spiritual gifts to attract new members	0%	0%	0%	60%	40%
Do you know your primary gifts	10%	40%	40%	10%	0%
Do you know your secondary gifts	0%	60%	10%	30%	0%
Are spiritual gifts necessary	60%	30%	10%	0%	0%
Can spiritual gifts increase ministry participation	80%	10%	0%	0%	10%
Are any ministries using spiritual gifts	10%	10%	0%	10%	70%

From the pre test, the respondents were very knowledgeable that spiritual gifts were necessary, and they can increase ministry participation. They knew very little about creating leaders based on spiritual gifts, using spiritual gifts to enhance ministry membership, if spiritual gifts are used in new member orientation and if any ministries use spiritual gifts.

Post Test

Questions	VK	SK	K	LK	NK
The purpose of the spiritual gift assessment	80%	20%	0%	0%	0%
Do you use spiritual gift in selecting leaders	30%	30%	20%	10%	10%
Are spiritual gifts used in membership orientations	30%	10%	30%	0%	30%
Do your ministry use spiritual gifts to attract new members	30%	30%	10%	0%	30%

Do you know your primary gifts	70%	30%	0%	0%	0%
Do you know your secondary gifts	60%	20%	10%	10%	0%
Are spiritual gifts necessary	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Can spiritual gifts increase ministry participation	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Are any ministries using spiritual gifts	30%	40%	0%	0%	30%

The results of the posttest indicate increased awareness and knowledge of the meaning and purpose of spiritual gifts. Many of the respondents moved from little knowledge to very knowledgeable in most areas of the spiritual gifts questionnaire. Most all of the areas where the respondents answered no knowledge on the pre test made significant strides toward attaining knowledge. These discoveries are important in affirming the model and its ability to impart knowledge on the participants.

The final table is a comparison of the pre and posttest side-by-side for each question. This table provides a quick assessment of the changes in attitudes from the beginning to the end of the project.

Pre/Post Test Mix

Questions	VK	SK	K	LK	NK
The purpose of the spiritual gift assessment	20%/80%	10%/20%	70%/0%	0%/0%	0%/0%
Do you use spiritual gift in selecting leaders	0%/30%	30%/30%	0%/20%	10%/10%	60%/20%
Are spiritual gifts used in membership orientations	0%/30%	0%/10%	20%/30%	0%	80%/30%
Do your ministry use spiritual gifts to attract new members	0%/30%	0%/30%	0%/10%	60%/0%	40%/30%
Do you know your primary gifts	10%/70%	40%/30%	40%/0%	10%/0%	0%/0%
Do you know your secondary gifts	0%/60%	60%/20%	10%/10%	30%/10%	0%/0%
Are spiritual gifts necessary	60%/100%	30%/0%	10%/0%	0%/0%	0%/0%
Can spiritual gifts increase	80%/100%	10%/0%	0%/0%	0%/0%	10%/0%

ministry participation					
Are any ministries using spiritual gifts	10%/30%	10%/40%	0%/0%	10%/0%	70%/30%

Data Triangulation

When comparing the results from the sermons, Bible studies and the spiritual gifts questionnaires, several things come to light. First, each segment revealed a willingness and desire on the part of the congregation to grow and reconnect the church to the community around it. Secondly, the data reveals that the congregation needed to be retooled, reequipped, and realigned to realize a new mission and vision for the church and community. Finally, the increase in knowledge from the spiritual gifts questionnaire coupled with a desire to serve the community and grow based on the principles of unity are indicators that members are ready to engage the community.

Ultimately, based on the intentionality of data triangulation, the project methodology allowed credible data to be obtained which supported the hypothesis for the project which was if the principles of community organizing, disciple making and outreach are taught, practiced and implemented within the life of the church, members would be compelled to establish meaningful relationships with those who live around the church as well as those who drive in.

Conclusion

Langston Hughes pens the words of the poem, *Mother to Son*, which say,

Well, son, I'll tell you: Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it,
And splinters, And boards torn up And places with no carpet on the floor—
Bare. But all the time I'se been a-climbin' on, And reachin' landin's, And turnin'

corners, And sometimes goin' in the dark Where there ain't been no light.
 So, boy, don't you turn back. Don't you set down on the steps.'Cause you finds it's
 kinder hard. Don't you fall now—For I'se still goin', honey, I'se still climbin',
 And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

These words are the epitome of my overall experience in life, ministry, and my matriculation through the Doctor of Ministry program at United Theological Seminary. Although there were times when I wanted to surrender to the easier paths of life, somehow, I just kept climbing and pressing my way. Much of my life and ministry journey has been chronicled in the pages of this document; however, the journey to this point in obtaining the Doctor of Ministry Degree is almost over and needs a few words of affirmation.

The journey has been a most grueling one. It has had its ups and downs and it seemed as if it was going to be a monumental task. Transforming a broken and wounded congregation who had just lost their beloved pastor through death and putting in the requisite amount of hours it takes to perform acceptable academic work made a believer out of me that God would not put more on you than you can bare. None-the-less, I am at this place in salvation history, still marveling at the glory of the Lord and wondering if the work I have done is not only my best work but acceptable for the purpose for which it was written and submitted.

Matriculation through the Doctor of Ministry program was not without its challenges and could have been made easier in some semesters with a cessation of the number of editorial and content changes that were made to the ministry handbook. Although the school was going through an accreditation progress, I believe that possibly too many changes were coming at the students at one time making it difficult to process

in addition to trying to process a self-directed pedagogy, which was being learned for the very first time.

As stated previously, life ain't been not crystal stair. I am certain about the collegial and collaborative experience along with a set of mentors who unselfishly gave of themselves to hold me to my highest possibility during this season.

I must take my hat off in total respect and adoration for the officers and members of St. Timothy church. The level by which they embraced this project as food for their own journey was amazing. During this process, they even allowed a woman to lead them through a significant portion of the fieldwork; what growth, what trust and what willingness to be instruments to usher in the kingdom of God. At each phase of the project implementation, we had more than sufficient numbers of participants for the task, and they continued to return each time as if they had adopted a mind to work and be accountable and responsible for the kind of congregation they want to be in and for the community. While this project gave a glimpse of the overall possibility of where St. Timothy can go, it also became the seedbed for developing a culture of self-directed in the hearts and minds of the congregation.

As we seek to do this project over, I would not make any changes in the overall program focus, rather, I would be very deliberate in extending the time of each phase of the field work into mini semesters to allow the material that is being learned to become new manna, new wine, and ultimately new DNA for our congregation. As I reflect on the experience of the Doctor of Ministry program and the tenure I have had with the congregation, I am amazed at the timing of God, placing pastor and people together at the

very time and season to birth a new thing in the atmosphere where pastor and people are willing participants in what God is doing.

Ultimately because of the leadership of my mentors, the collegiality of my peers, the support of my congregation and the trust I placed in this process, the project supported my hypothesis and is uniquely positioned to be replicated in any congregation in the country who seek to stop doing evangelism and discipleship as two separate ministries and begin being accountable to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

All honor and glory belong to God for the great things he has done in and through the St. Timothy Church and me. It is our prayer that our work will ultimately be a blessing to thousands of churches across the country as we seek to be faithful to building God's kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

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